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VESTIGIA ANGLICANA;

OR,

Illustrations

OF THE MORE INTERESTING AND DEBATABLE POINTS

IN THE

HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES

OF

ENGLAND:

FROM THE EARLIEST AGES

TO

THE ACCESSION OF THE HOUSE OF TUDOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

STEPHEN REYNOLDS CLARKE.

*"Ce qu'on aurait voulu retenir de la lecture de l'histoire, ce qu'on
aimerait à s'en rappeler."*

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VESTIGIA.

DISSERTATION VIII.

Waltham Cross.

THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET,

CONTINUED.

EDWARD I. - - - A.D. 1272.

EDWARD II. - - - — 1307.

SECTION I.

P.—THIS pleasant drive of twelve miles from the metropolis has brought us by some *detours* to Waltham Cross, a singular ruin, interesting in its associations, and venerable in its decay.

A.—The erection of crosses is of very ancient date, and they have been applied to various purposes; such as boundary-marks, memorials of remarkable events, places of public prayer, preaching, and proclamation: some were built in churchyards, or by the road side; others in market-places, or at the junction of three or four streets, or on spots like the present, where deceased bodies halted on their way to interment. Market crosses at first appear to have consisted of a single shaft, and afterwards they were enlarged and arched over for the accommodation of the auditors. At the dissolution of the monasteries, there was scarcely a

market town in England without its cross, from which the preaching friars harangued the people. The fabric before us, with a series of other crosses, was constructed by Edward I. as a tender memorial of conjugal affection in honour of his wife, Eleanor, princess of Castile, who died^a at Herdeby, near Lincoln (1296); at every stage of the journey, where the corpse rested on its way to Westminster Abbey, a cross was erected, each of different architecture.

F.—In like manner, a series of crosses formerly stood by the side of the road between Paris and St. Denys, where the kings of France were usually interred.

A.—A difference of opinion has arisen as to the places at which these crosses of Edward were erected; but Camden,^b who lived at a period when they all remained entire, and who, from his topographical pursuits, had probably seen them, mentions these ten—Lincoln, Grantham, Stamford, Geddington, Northampton, Stoney Stratford, Dunstable, St. Albans, Waltham, and Charing, or Westminster; of these, at the present time, but three remain; namely, Northampton, Geddington, and this of Waltham.

F.—Charing Cross, the most magnificent of the whole, was demolished by order of the House of Commons (1647), as popish and superstitious.

The committee said, that verily
To popery it was bent:
For aught I know, it might be so,
For to church it never went.

What with excise, and such device,
The kingdom doth begin
To think you'll leave them ne'er a cross
Without doors, nor within.^c

P.—In looking at the map, we cannot but observe,

^a Heming.

^b Remains.

^c Percy, Relics, vol. 2.

that the procession in leaving St. Albans must have gone considerably out of its way to reach Waltham, in Essex.

F.—That monastery having been a royal foundation was probably the cause of the compliment.

A.—This cross, placed at the head of the road which turns from the great north road, is not even in the parish of Waltham, but in Cheshunt, in the county of Hertford. The structure, we see, is a hexagon of three stories; the lower of which is ornamented with the arms of England, Castile and Leon, and Ponthieu, in pendant shields; in the second story, under niches of tabernacle work, appear three statues of the queen, though sadly mutilated, about six feet in height, and originally of no contemptible execution; they are supposed to be copies of an original taken from life, and are of a very feminine and pleasing appearance. The upper story is of solid masonry, supporting the broken shaft of a plain cross; and the whole work is thought to have been executed by Peter Cavallini, a Roman artist.

P.—Time has laid its deforming hand upon the beauty of Waltham Cross; but much of its merit is concealed, and its ornaments damaged, by the contiguity of the neighbouring house; yet we still behold it with pleasure as part of a noble and unequalled tribute of conjugal affection.

A.—Eleanor was entirely worthy of her husband's esteem: she is described as elegant in person and gentle in manners, pious, prudent, charitable, abstaining from all interference in matters of state, and employing her authority to relieve the distressed and to reconcile those who were at variance.*

F.—Yet a strange exemplification of Shakspeare's phrase, "be thou pure as snow thou shalt not escape

* Mat. Westm. Heming.

calumny," is to be seen in a ballad of some celebrity,^a entitled "A Warning Piece to England against pride and wickedness, being the fate of Queen Eleanor, wife to Edward the First, king of England, who for her pride, by God's judgments, sunk into the ground at Charing Cross and rose at Queenhithe." This delectable composition seems to be founded on an old play of nearly the same title, by George Peele (1593). What could induce the writers to fix these groundless aspersions on her fame, it is difficult to account for, unless we admit the conjecture, that a concealed satire was meant against Queen Mary; but the only point of resemblance seems to have consisted in the Spanish blood that flowed in the veins of both sovereigns.

A.—Notwithstanding the severity of Edward's character, his conduct in the various domestic relations of life was singularly tender: when news of his father's death reached him in Sicily, returning home from the Holy Land, he discovered a great deal of sorrow on the occasion; yet soon after learning the death of an infant which his princess had borne him at Acre, he appeared much less affected; at which some person expressing surprise, he replied, that God might send him more sons, but the death of a father was irreparable.^b Edward made no haste to return to England; but the council immediately proclaiming him king, at Henry the Third's death, all orders of men were forward to swear allegiance.

F.—Such was the force of his reputation over the turbulent spirits of that age, that Edward may be said to be the first monarch since the Conquest who acceded to the throne without some commotion or opposition.

^a Evans, *Old Ballads*, vol. 1.

^b Walsingham.

A.—In his passage through Chalons, in Burgundy, Edward was challenged by the prince of that country to a tournament, and the king and the English knights were so successful in their jousts that the French, provoked at their superiority, made a serious attack upon them, as it was thought, by the instigation of the banished sons of Simon de Montfort: the attack was repulsed, but much blood was shed in this idle quarrel, which received the name of the petty battle of Chalons (1273).^a On the king's arrival in England, his conduct fully answered the high expectations that had been formed of his wisdom: he applied himself assiduously to correct those disorders which, from the weakness of Henry's government, had prevailed in every department of the state; he compelled a rigid observance of the laws; he gave protection to the inferior orders of his subjects, and by respecting the provisions of the Great Charter himself, except indeed on some particular occasions, he acquired the right to dictate to his barons an equal regard to the interests of their vassals. By such proceedings, the whole kingdom was presently changed from a scene of misrule and licentiousness to a state of tranquillity and a strict obedience to the laws.^b

F.—However laudable the end, the means by which these benefits were obtained were not exactly in the spirit of a free constitution; a commission being established with somewhat of an arbitrary power to punish, which too frequently confounded the innocent with the guilty.

A.—The unfortunate Jews were the first who felt the full force of Edward's severity. Amongst the disorders of the late reign, none was found more injurious than the adulteration of the coin; for this crime not

^a Walsingham. Mat. Westm.

^b Trivet.

less than two hundred and eighty of that ill-fated race were hanged in London alone; and in the course of a few years the whole tribe were banished the kingdom, to the number of fifteen thousand: they were allowed a safe conduct by Edward and a competent sum for their journey, but at the outports they were despoiled, and many thrown into the sea by the mariners, which crime, however, the king did not suffer to go unpunished.^a

F.—The two chief events in the reign of Edward are his subjugation of Wales and his attempted subjugation of Scotland, both of them iniquitous projects; but as the first was attended with success, and as it has been ultimately beneficial to both countries, it has not only been forgiven, but applauded.

A.—Since the retreat of the ancient Britons from the conquering arms of the Saxons, eight hundred years before this period, the history of Wales is of small importance, and the names of its princes have scarcely spread beyond the limits of their native district. A century and a half after the death of King Arthur, the nominal sovereignty of Britain expired in Cadwallader, who in a time of pestilence and famine retired to Armorica, and soon after died at Rome (688) in the habit of a monk.^b His successors contented themselves with the humbler title of Princes of Wales; one of them, Roderic Mawr, made a tripartite division of the country, into Powisland, North and South Wales, among his three sons (843). The superiority seems chiefly to have remained with North Wales; but though perpetual contentions and rapine were the consequence of such a division, yet it does not appear that the Welsh were in a much more barbarous state than their neighbours, if we may judge from the laws still extant^c of

^a Wykes, Chron. ^b Galf. Mon. lib. 2. M. Westin. ^c Wotton, Leges Wallice.

Hoel Dha, or Hoel the Good, a prince of South Wales (940), which, however rude, may be considered as respectable a piece of jurisprudence as any Anglo Saxon code of the same date.

F.—Could the Welsh substantiate an obscure tradition, they would be entitled to the great honour of being esteemed the discoverers of America, three centuries before the voyage of Columbus. Madoc, a younger son of Owen Gwineth, prince of North Wales, dissatisfied with the convulsions of his country, sailed (1170) with a small fleet of ships to the westward; leaving Ireland upon the north; coming to an unknown land, he found there many things new and uncouth, but was delighted with the pleasantness of the air and fertility of the soil: he returned however to Wales for the purpose of collecting an additional number of his countrymen, with whom sailing back in ten ships, he bade Britain a final adieu, and was never heard of more.

P.—What part of America was this flotilla supposed to reach?

F.—Florida has been fixed on as the place of the Welshmen's settlement, from an assertion of Francis Lopez de Gomara, a Spanish author of repute, that in Acuzamil, and in some other parts of that province, a tribe of Americans were found who paid worship to the Cross;^a whilst some have chosen Mexico, on the ground that Montezuma acknowledged his ancestors to be derived from a foreign stock, which came from a far country; others again pretend to find the remains of this colony on the isthmus of Darien.^b The authors of the Turkish Spy assert that the Tuscoraras

^a Lib. 3, c. 32.

^b An Essay to show an affinity between the languages of the Ancient Britons and the Americans of the isthmus of Darien. Edinburgh, 1738.

and Doege^a are the descendants of these Welsh adventurers, though in what part of America such races are to be found I am unable to discover.

P.—The present Lanreat, in his poem of Madoc, establishes his hero at Aztlan, an imaginary kingdom likewise, as I conjecture, not finding it in the American Gazetteer.

F.—The partizans in the belief of this emigration had once great confidence in the resemblance of certain words in the two languages of Wales and Mexico, particularly in the name of the bird penguin, which, it seems, in Welsh means white head, but unfortunately all the American species have their heads uniformly black; so that, as Pennant observes, we must resign the hope of retrieving the Cambrian race in the New World by this hypothesis.

P.—But surely we may suppose the tradition to rest upon some plausible foundation.

F.—The first mention of the Welsh Columbus is in a history of Wales by Dr. Powell (1584), who asserts that his account is taken from records preserved in the abbeys of Conway and Stratflur. Later authorities have endeavoured to authenticate the story by a reference to a poem of Meredyth ap Rhys, who flourished in the year 1470, full twenty years before the voyage of the great Genoese admiral: the poet thus alludes to his countryman:

Madoc I am, the son of Owen Gwynedd,
With stature large, and comely grace adorn'd;
No lands at home, nor store of wealth me please;
My minde was whole to search the ocean seas.

This homely translation is taken from Hakluyt's collection of voyages.

A.—These verses prove no more than that Madoc,

^a Vol. 8.

dissatisfied with his domestic situation, employed himself in searching the ocean for new possessions. If he really discovered an unknown country, the course which he steered would more readily carry him to Madeira, or to one of the Azore islands, than to America. Had the voyage been considered as of any importance in his own time, it could not have been overlooked by cotemporary writers, particularly Giraldus Cambrensis, himself a Welshman, and copious in the description of his own country, to the glory of which such a discovery would not have a little contributed. If we do not therefore, with a modern geographer,^a call this discovery of Madoc a ridiculous fiction, we must at least suspend our belief till more sufficient proofs appear.

F.—Though Wales remained in a half barbarous state, it is greatly to the credit of its inhabitants, that for so many centuries they maintained their independence; nor could the Norman kings of England, with all their power, reduce the country to a state even of feudal subjection.

A.—In the reign of Henry the Third, Llewellyn, prince of Wales, broken with infirmities, and harassed by the rebellion of one of his sons, consented, as the price of protection, to subject the principality in vassalage to the crown of England. The grandson of this degenerate prince, of the same name, desirous of shaking off the yoke, joined the rebellious barons in conjunction with Simon de Montfort: at the accession of Edward, being called upon to renew the feudal homage, he became alarmed at the danger of trusting his person into the hands of a jealous and irritated enemy. The refusal gave a colourable pretence to the ambitious revenge of Edward; and now, aided

^a Pinkerton, Geog.

by David and Roderic, the brothers of the Welsh prince, who had indeed been unjustly deprived of their possessions, he pierced into the heart of the country; where shutting up Llewellyn in the inaccessible mountains of Snowdon, he compelled him by the rigour of famine to surrender at discretion. The conditions of peace being ill observed by the conquerors, the Welsh again flew to arms, and David, sensible too late of his imprudence, returned to the support of his brother's authority; but in a battle against Roger Mortimer, Llewellyn, with two thousand of his followers, perished in the field; and David, after various disguises and escapes, being at length betrayed, this last branch of one of the oldest royal families in Europe, was inhumanly hanged, drawn, and quartered, for taking arms in defence of his native country.*

F.—This mode of punishing traitors seems to have been first adopted in England on this lamentable occasion; whatever may have been the rudeness and incivilization of the Welsh, there is no legal infliction in the code of Hoel Dha of equal barbarity.

P.—So thinking, who could suppose that men yet living can remember seeing exposed, on Temple bar, the heads of decapitated nobles.

A.—During David's residence in England he had accepted of a barony; and thus, under the shameful pretext of his being a rebel, he was tried and condemned by the English peers in a parliament assembled at Shrewsbury.

F.—In other particulars the cruelty of Edward has perhaps been exaggerated. The story of the massacre of the bards, in order to extinguish those sparks of national feeling which their recitations were calculated

* Hemingford. Mat. Westm.

to excite, appears to be without foundation, though the popularity of Gray's ode has given the opinion almost universal credence; but

High-born Hoel's harp, and soft Llewellyn's lay,

probably continued to exert their characteristic excellence, without being silenced by the stern command of an unfeeling conqueror.

A.—The only authority for this generally received tradition is Sir John Wynne's history of the Gwydir family, written about two centuries ago, in which the circumstance is thus related: "Edward the First caused our bards all to be hanged by martial law, as stirrers of the people to sedition, whose example being followed by the governors of Wales, until Henry the Fourth, was the utter destruction of that race of men." Now this account of the matter clearly involves a contradiction; for if the race had been exterminated, what need was there for a statute from Henry the Fourth? the provisions of which are somewhat curious; it enacting, that "No waster, rhymor, minstrel, or vagabond, shall be suffered in Wales, and such persons are prohibited from holding their kymorthas, or public assemblies, or making their annual progress;"* but no punishment is provided for the offence, unless the imprisonment mentioned in the next chapter of the act be applicable. In the statute of Edward the First for the future government of Wales, though descending to very minute particulars, I can find no mention whatever of the bards.

F.—The anecdote of Edward's promising the Welsh a prince, by birth a Welshman, and who could speak no other language than their own, is somewhat of the same complexion, as it is not mentioned by any histo-

* Stat. 4, Hen. IV.

rian, as far as I have been able to trace, earlier than Stow. On the people's acclamations of joy and promise of obedience at this declaration, he produced to them his infant son, who had been just born in the castle of Caernarvon; the death of Alphonso, his eldest son, soon following, made this young Edward heir of the monarchy, and henceforth the principality has given a title to the eldest son of the subsequent kings of England.

A.—Within a few years from the conquest and settlement of Wales, the hope of a more important acquisition gave full employment to Edward during the remainder of his reign. The pretensions of this monarch to the dominion of Scotland is one of the most important events in the ancient English history, from the circumstances by which it was attended and the evil train of consequences which it left behind.

P.—Till this period Scotland seems to have had but small connection with its more powerful neighbour.

A.—The early history of Scotland is involved in a cloud of impenetrable obscurity. To the Romans, the southern part of that kingdom was known by the name of Caledonia; we have already seen* that, so early as the latter end of the third century, the northern part was inhabited by the Scots and Picts. We will not again renew the controversy of the origin of these tribes further than by remarking, that we before concluded the Scots to have been a colony from Ireland, and the Picts the descendants of the ancient Caledonians with a new appellation.

F.—No person who had not made some research would imagine how large a number of volumes has been written, and how much ink, well tintured with gall, has been wasted on this unprofitable enquiry.

* Vol. I, dissert. 2, p. 51.

A.—Dr. Robertson divides the history of Scotland into four parts; the first of which reaches from the earliest ages to the reign of Kenneth the Second, who died 859. This, says that royal historiographer, is the region of pure fable and conjecture, to be totally neglected or left abandoned to the industry and credulity of antiquaries.

P.—But as we have made enquiry into the romancing chronicles of the early ages of England and Ireland, it would be disrespectful not to pay the same attention to the corresponding period of the Scottish history.

A.—These fictions are even less entertaining and, if possible, worse attested. The early history of Scotland was first traced by Fordun, an historian of the fourteenth century, and being left imperfect by him, was filled up, and brought into a continued narration by Hector Boethius, or Boyse, principal of the King's college, at Aberdeen, in the sixteenth century; and the whole soon after was revised and put into a more specious form by the celebrated George Buchanan, whose noble Latin style recommended it to the attention of the learned. The Pictish antiquities make no great figure: their kings, from the age of Cruidne, the father of the Picts, who flourished three hundred years before Christ, to the date of the union of the two people under Kenneth the Second, are said to have been about seventy in number; but their actions are without the least interest, and their names either ridiculous or ineffable, as Brudebout, their fifteenth, or Blicibliterth, their twenty-second monarch.

F.—The chroniclers, in acknowledging the Scots to be of Irish descent, admit, of course, all the nonsense of their Milesian pedigree.

A.—These authorities relate, that Fergus, son of

Ferchard, a petty Irish prince, was called in by the Caledonians, three hundred and thirty years before Christ, to assist them in repelling the invasion of Coilus, king of Britain, who being presently after defeated and slain, Fergus, in grateful return for his good services, was declared the first king of Scots; but he did not long enjoy his dignity, for returning on some occasion to Ireland, he was drowned by a sudden tempest, at a place called from this event Knock, or Carrick Fergus.

F.—This savours much of the manner of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who has a dexterous knack of combining fictitious events with established names so artfully as to create a sort of local relation which it is sometimes difficult to eradicate.

A.—The names of the successors of Fergus, till they were latinized by Hector Boethius, are equally barbarous as those in the Pictish list; amongst them is Corbred Galdus, or Galgacus, the renowned opponent of Agricola. The fortieth king of Scots was another Fergus, the son of Erc, a petty prince of Dalriada, in Ulster, who appears also to have been a real person, and under whose sway the Scots permanently established themselves in the north-west part of Caledonia; but whether this prince flourished in the fourth, fifth, or sixth century is uncertain: he is said to have left descendants, whose power increased, till Kenneth the Second, the twenty-ninth monarch in succession from him, partly by conquest and partly by an hereditary claim, happily effected an union of the Scottish and Pictish crowns (836).

P.—The portraits of this long series of Scottish kings, continued to James the Sixth, in number one hundred and eleven, ornament the gallery of Holyrood House, Edinburgh; in which the peers choose their

sixteen representatives. The style in which they are executed by De Witt, bears the same relation to the beauty of the pictorial art as the legend does to the truth of history.

F.—Kenneth the Second is represented to be a politic as well as brave warrior; for being repulsed by the Picts, and finding it difficult to renew the war, he found means to gain over his nobility by the following ridiculous stratagem: having invited them to an entertainment, the king introduced into the hall in which they slept a person clothed in a robe made of the skins of fishes, which gave out such a luminous appearance in the dark that he was mistaken for an angel, or some supernatural messenger; and to add to the terror, he denounced, through a speaking trumpet, the most terrible judgments, if war were not immediately declared against the Picts.*

A.—With Kenneth the Second terminates Dr. Robertson's period of pure fable and conjecture. The next period of Scottish history, according to the same authority, reaches to the death of Alexander the Third, in the year 1285, who was the cotemporary of Edward the First: "In the progress of these five centuries, truth begins to dawn, with a light feeble at first, but gradually increasing; the events which then happened may be slightly touched, but merit no very particular or laborious enquiry;" and indeed, from the paucity of ancient Scottish records, the chief part of which were supposed to be destroyed or removed by Edward the First, the transactions of the kingdom are chiefly to be gleaned from scattered passages in the English historians.

F.—Scotland, like its neighbour, was long infested

* Fordun, lib. 4.

by the cruel ravages of the piratical Danes: it was also early afflicted by witches, and terrified by frequent prodigies; there sometimes appeared in the Forth "fishes in great numbers, like unto men in shape, swimming up and down the stream, having a black skin, which covered their heads and necks from their shoulders upwards, in manner of a hood; these are called 'bassinates,' and they go in great companies together, as though they were skulls of herrings, signifying," as the historian* prudently adds, "*when seen*, some great misfortune to the country," such as the violent death of the monarch, which was no unusual circumstance.

A.—The only historical part of this long era which can at all interest an English ear, is the usurpation of Macbeth, an event immortalized by the tragedy of Shakspeare. It is curious to observe how this matter is related in Holinshed's Chronicle, as translated from Hector Boethius; two or three extracts, from the simplicity of the style, may amuse you: after having related that Duncan was the grandson of Malcolm, his predecessor on the throne, by an elder daughter, and that Macbeth was equally descended by a younger daughter, the chronicler goes on to state, that Duncan was renowned for the gentleness, and Macbeth for the cruelty, of his disposition; he then gives an account of the rebellion of Macdowald in the western isles, which was caused by the excessive rigour of Banquo in his office of high steward; after the suppression of this commotion, and the defeat of a body of the invading Danes, as Macbeth and Banquo were "journeying towards Fores, where the king then lay, they went sporting together by the way, without other company, save

* Holinshed.

only themselves, passing the rough, the woods, and fields, when suddenly, in the midst of a *laund*, there met them three women in strange and wild apparel, resembling creatures of the elder world; who, when they attentively beheld, much wondering at the sight, the first of them spake and said, 'All haile, Macbeth, thane of Glamis!' the second of them said, 'Haile, Macbeth, thane of Cawdor!' but the third said, 'All haile, Macbeth, that hereafter shall be king of Scotland!'"

P.—These are nearly the precise words of the salutation, as given by Shakspeare.

A.—"Then Banquo saith, 'What manner of women are you that seem so little favourable unto me; whereas to my fellow here, besides high offices, ye assign also the kingdom, appointing nothing for me at all?' 'Yes,' saith the first, 'we promise greater benefits unto thee than him; for he shall reign indeed, but with an unlucky end; neither shall he leave any issue behind him to succeed in his place; when contrarilie, thou indeed shalt not reign at all, but of thee shall those be born which shall govern the Scottish kingdom by order of continual descent.' Herewith the aforesaid women immediately vanished out of their sight. This was reputed at the first but some vain fantastical illusion, insomuch that Banquo would call Macbeth, in jest, 'king of Scotland,' and Macbeth would call him 'father of many kings;' but afterwards the common opinion was, these women were either the weird sisters, that is, as you would say, the goddesses of destiny, or else some nymphs or fairies endued with knowledge of prophecy by their necromantic science, because every thing came to pass as they had spoken."

P.—The incidents in Shakspeare's marvellous *com-*
VOL. II. C

position are not then to be attributed to his own fertile imagination?

A.—Scarcely one of them. The narrative thus proceeds: "Shortly after, it chanced that King Duncan made the elder of his sons prince of Cumberland, as it were thereby to appoint him his successor; Macbeth, sore troubled herewith, began to devise how he might attain the kingdom, greatly encouraged by the words of the weird sisters, but specially his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of a queen; at length, therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trusty friends, amongst whom Banquo was the chiefest, upon confidence of their promised aid he slew the king at Inverness."

F.—The incident in the play of making Duncan's chamberlains drunk, and laying the guilt of the assassination upon them, with their subsequent slaughter, are borrowed from the account which Holinshed relates of a predecessor of Duncan, who was slain under those circumstances about eighty years before.

A.—The murder of Banquo and the escape of Fleance are taken also from the same authority; and here the poet found the equivocal predictions on which his hero so fatally depended. "He had learned of certain wysards how that he ought to take heed of Macduffe, and surely hereupon had he put him to death, but a certain witch whom he had in great trust had told, that he should never be slain with man born of any woman, nor vanquished till the wood of Birnam came to the castell of Dunsinane." And the whole tenor and bearing of the scene between Macduffe and Malcolm in England, in which the latter depreciates his own qualities, is almost literally borrowed from the historian.

But we seem to be rather criticising Shakspeare's play, than explaining the early history of Scotland.

P.—And to me I must own that it is the more interesting subject; but to what cause are we to attribute in the historians of Scotland this amplification of circumstances in the story of Macbeth?

F.—It has been thought that it was done to flatter the Stuart family, by attributing to them a higher antiquity than they could authentically establish.

A.—The characters of Banquo and his son Fleance are the inventions of Hector Boethius for that purpose, who deduces from them the origin of the Stuart race; yet the first undoubted ancestor of that family was Walter, great steward or master of the household to David the First (1153). Beyond this person the various pedigrees of the Stuarts are nothing but fabulous genealogies; yet it is difficult to divest ~~the nation~~ of its opinion of their descent from Banquo, who never had other than poetical existence; in whose prophetic glass the poet disclosed the long procession of his posterity:

..... And some I see
That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry.

F.—The subsequent events which connect the Scottish with the English history are the death of Malcolm Canmore, the son of Duncan, who perished in an invasion of England, in the reign of William Rufus (1093), and the capture of William the Lion, by Glanville, the justiciary, as already related in the reign of Henry the Second (1174).

A.—Till the death of Alexander the Third, in the year 1285, the succession of the Scottish monarchy had often been disordered by irregularities and usurpations, but the heir of the royal family had still in the end pre-

vailed, and that prince inherited, after a period of eight hundred years, and probably through a succession of males, the sceptre of Kenneth the Second, who united the Scottish and Pictish kingdoms. Alexander died by a fall from his horse: he was long lamented for the equity and vigour of his government, and let us not, says Fordun, the Scottish chronicler, with much feeling, question the salvation of this king because of his violent death, for he who has lived well cannot die ill.

P.—What were the pretensions of Edward to interfere with the Scottish government at this melancholy juncture?

A.—Alexander in early life had espoused the English princess Margaret, sister to Edward, by whom he had an only daughter, married to Eric, king of Norway; the issue of which marriage was likewise an only daughter, Margaret, commonly called the Maid of Norway, and the undoubted heiress of the Scottish throne. Edward intended to marry his son Edward, prince of Wales, to this princess, and thus unite the two kingdoms into one monarchy; which project, no less equitable than prudent, was defeated by the unexpected demise of the young Scottish queen, at the age of only five years. It is difficult to find in history a death that occasioned more disastrous consequences.

F.—As the posterity in the direct line of the royal race of Scotland had now failed, it became necessary to search for the collateral branch.

A.—The right to the crown was found to be in the issue of David, earl of Huntingdon, brother of William the Lion: from this stock were descended John Baliol, the grandson of the elder daughter, and Robert Bruce, the son of the second daughter of that earl. By the rule of succession now established, Baliol's right was

preferable; he would succeed as the representative of his mother and grandmother, and Bruce's plea of being one degree nearer the common stock would be disregarded; but as there was no exact precedent in the Scottish annals which could decide this important question,* the parliament of Scotland, to avoid the miseries of a civil war, as each competitor was supported by a powerful faction, embraced the dangerous expedient of appealing to the English monarch: and here I must say, though myself an Englishman, that more base, selfish, and disingenuous conduct has seldom been exhibited than that which actuated the politic and mighty Edward.

F.—To this period the amity of the two nations had never been interrupted by long or destructive hostilities, and consequently the Scottish states might have expected more equitable treatment, especially as Edward, recently called upon to decide a dispute between the kings of France and Arragon, with regard to the disposal of the crown of Sicily, had acquitted himself with honour.^b

A.—His treatment of the late prince of Wales and his brother should have taught the Scots better, and the present temptation soon proved how easily integrity may be overcome by opportunity: the first step of Edward was to create, or at least revive, his claim to the feudal superiority of Scotland.^c

F.—It is generally allowed that the kings of Scotland, for many generations previous, did homage to the kings of England, but the object for which this homage was performed remains still a point of controversy; the partizans of Edward wished to consider it as paid for the crown itself of Scotland, or at least for that part of the kingdom lying south of the Forth, whilst most of the Scottish writers contend that their kings

* Hemingford.

^b Mat. Westm.

^c Walsingham.

swore fealty merely for Cumberland, or some other fiefs, such as the earldom of Huntingdom, which they enjoyed south of the Tweed, in the same manner as the king of England himself swore fealty to the French monarch for the provinces which he inherited in France.

A.—We have already seen that in the reign of Athelstan,^a the king of Scots, Constantine, was compelled, after the battle of Brunsbury, to perform homage on being restored to his kingdom: this could not mean merely for fiefs held in England, it being doubtful whether he possessed any there: how far this homage was continued by his successors, or what subjection it implied, is uncertain. Malcolm Canmore paid the usual homage, whatever it was, to William the Conqueror, at Abernethy,^b in Perthshire, being dreadfully frightened at the appearance of the Norman in his kingdom.

F.—When William the Lion, taken prisoner by the justiciary Glanville, in the reign of Henry the Second, performed his undoubted homage for the crown itself of Scotland, it appeared to be considered as a novelty;^c but that act formed not the basis of Edward's claim, as William was released from its continuance by the payment of ten thousand marks to Richard the First, and the homage was replaced on its old foundation: it had so been recently performed by the deceased king, Alexander, to Henry the Third,^d and we may conclude that it meant a vague assumption of superiority in the English king, without any very specific obligations on the part of the Scottish liege man: the more powerful party seems always to have been intent to impress, and the weaker, when opportunity offered, always equally anxious to deny or elude the claim.

A.—Edward proceeded in a straight forward and

^a Vol. 1, p. 128. ^b Sim. Dunelm.. ^c Gul. Neubrig. lib. 2. ^d M. Paris.

undeviating determination : under the pretence of examining the question of the succession with the utmost solemnity, he summoned the Scottish barons to attend him at Norham Castle, in Northumberland, and there by flatteries or intimidation he prevailed with them, amongst whom were both Baliol and Bruce, to acknowledge Scotland as a fief of the English crown, and to swear fealty to him as their feudal sovereign; and pretending that it was in vain to pronounce a sentence which he had not power to execute, he demanded possession of the fortresses of the disputed kingdom. Being attended with a powerful army, the barons found it impossible to resist, and Edward then referred the claims of the competitors to a hundred and forty commissioners, partly English partly Scotch; he proposed the question also to the most celebrated lawyers in Europe, who returned an uniform answer, and the right of the crown was declared to be in Baliol.*

F.—The award itself must be allowed as equitable as it was solemn.

A.—Edward having thus established his claim of feudal superiority, it was soon perceived that he aimed at nothing short of the absolute sovereignty of the kingdom; he attempted to provoke Baliol to rebellion by many indignities, that after the example of the Welsh prince, he might be proclaimed a traitor, and his dominions forfeit. Baliol was compelled to appear as a vassal at the bar of the English parliament,^b and the temper of that prince, though mild, at length began to mutiny, and he sought a secret alliance with the king of France, against whom Edward was now at war, originating in a quarrel between the seamen of the two nations.

* Hemingford. Walsingham.

^b Rymer, vol. 2.

F.—This alliance was remarkable, as being the commencement of that strict union between France and Scotland, which was maintained during some centuries by their mutual necessities, though perhaps of no real advantage to the weaker party, whose interests were often sacrificed to the conveniency of the stronger.

A.—Edward, exasperated at this defection, prepared to chastise Baliol, and he entered Scotland with a powerful army and assaulted Berwick; he at first met with a manful resistance, thus commemorated by a Scottish balladmonger :

Wend King Edward, with his lange shankes,
To have gude Berwyke al our unthankes ?
Gas pikes hym, and after gas dikes hym.

The town however was presently taken by Edward, who totally routed the Scots soon after, with great slaughter, at Dunbar;^a on which event an English poet thus retaliated :

Early in a morning,
In an evil tyding,
Went ye froo Dunbarre.^b

Baliol, unpopular with his own subjects, and overawed by the English, made a solemn renunciation of his crown (1296); coming to Edward with a white rod in his hand,^c and the conqueror marching throughout the kingdom, received from every quarter assurances of submission, and he flattered himself that he had attained the great object of his ambition, the final reduction of Scotland. He acted as the uncontrolled master of the kingdom, and if there be some doubt whether he destroyed the records and other monuments of antiquity, which might preserve the memory of its independence, there is no doubt that he wounded the

^a Walsingham.

^b Ritson, *Ancient Songs*.

^c Rymer, vol. 2.

pride of the Scottish nation by removing an ancient stone* preserved at Scone, to which the populace paid the highest veneration: it was reported to be the same which served Jacob for a pillow, and it had been carried from the Holy Land into Spain, from whence it was brought by the Milesians to Ireland; afterwards it was transported to Scotland by Fergus, son of Erc, and by Kenneth the Second it was enclosed in a wooden chair, in which himself and the succeeding kings were seated when they received the rite of inauguration: it was inscribed with this distich—

*Ni fallat fatum, Scoti quacunq; locatum,
Invenient lapidem, regnare tenentur ibidem.^b*

*Or fate's deceived, and heaven's decrees are vain,
Or where they find this stone the Scots shall reign.*

With something of a superstitious feeling, Edward removed this stone to Westminster Abbey. The prediction was oddly enough fulfilled when James the Sixth ascended the throne of England.

F.—A doubt has been started by antiquaries whether the stone exhibited at present in that venerable pile be the identical relic, as by the treaty of Northampton, concluded by Mortimer in the beginning of Edward the Third's reign, it was agreed to be restored; but though a writ was issued for that purpose, it was never executed, and we may rest satisfied in the assurance that we still keep possession of the sacred palladium.

A.—The unfortunate Baliol, weak as unfortunate, and yet it is difficult to say what conduct would have prevented his misfortunes, was confined in the Tower of London, where he remained two years, and then submitted to a voluntary banishment in France,^c in

* Rymer, vol. 2.

^b Hemmingford.

^c Mat. Westm.

which country, totally forgotten, he died long after in a private station.* The Baliols were originally a Norman family, and had large possessions in England as well as Scotland: it was the father of the Scottish king who endowed at Oxford the college bearing his own name.

P.—But it cannot be supposed that an ancient kingdom, like Scotland, long boasting its independence, would submit to the yoke of a conqueror without much inquietude.

A.—Edward chose unsuitable instruments for its subjugation. Earl Warenne, the general, retiring from the command on account of ill health, the administration fell into the hands of Ormsby and Cressingham, the officers next in rank; the former distinguished by his severity, the latter by his avarice: both made the Scots feel too severely the loss of their independence.^b In this conjuncture arose the celebrated Sir William Wallace, whose real exploits and valour are worthy of the highest encomium, without having resort to the exaggerated traditions of romance. This person appears to have possessed every requisite of popularity; superior to the rest of mankind in stature, strength, and activity; equally valiant and prudent; magnanimous and disinterested; undaunted in adversity; modest in prosperity; and animated with a genuine and ardent love of his country.

P.—This is drawing the character of a perfect hero.

A.—Wallace was descended from an ancient family of small fortune, in the west of Scotland. It is the received opinion, that he was outlawed for killing an Englishman: betaking himself to the woods, he was joined by men of desperate fortunes or of avowed hostility to the English nation: beginning with small

* Heming.

^b Heming. Walsingham.

attempts, he gradually proceeded to more momentous enterprizes, till at length, all men who thirsted after military fame became desirous of partaking his renown.

F.—Though no person of rank for some time joined his party, yet the valour and conduct of Wallace had inspired a general confidence and attachment, which mere birth and fortune are unable to attain.

A.—At length some of the principal barons countenancing Wallace's attempts, the Scots took arms in every quarter, and the English, panic struck, hastily fled.^a Earl Warrene, however, to compensate for his past negligence, returned with an army of forty thousand men, and seduced to his party many of the most potent barons: but Wallace, still undaunted, retired northwards with the intention of prolonging the war in that mountainous and barren country. The English in full pursuit arrived at Stirling, where Wallace permitting a part of their army to pass the river Forth, attacked them before they were fully formed, and gained a complete victory: this was the most brilliant exploit in Wallace's career. Earl Warrene was compelled to retreat into England with all speed: in this battle, Cressingham, who bore the office of treasurer, was slain; a person so odious to the Scots, that they converted his skin into girths for their saddles.^b

P.—But were the English conquests annihilated by the effect of this single action?

A.—Wallace recovered the principal fortresses, and was now universally revered as the deliverer of his country; he wisely retaliated on the English, by ravaging the northern counties, and then retiring with the spoil.

F.—The English writers charge Wallace with exer-

^a Walsingham.

^b Heming.

cising the most unheard-of cruelties in this incursion: his troops were doubtless capable of committing any excesses, but that their leader could shew humanity as well as bravery, we may judge from his advice to a priest of Hexham, who expressed his apprehension of their violence: "Abide with me," said Wallace, "here alone you can be safe, for my men be evil doers, and I may not punish them."*

A.—Edward, who received in Flanders intelligence of these disastrous events, was incensed at his disgrace, and prepared to renew his conquest with an army of one hundred thousand men, a force which Scotland was at no time able to withstand: and now a jealousy of Wallace's superiority arising amongst the nobles, added to their usual factions and animosities, distracted every prudent counsel and exposed the nation to total ruin.

P.—How often does the conduct of the great barons force the observation, that they seemed to consider the interests of their country as of small importance compared with their own personal aggrandizement.

A.—Sensible of the envy of the nobility, Wallace resigned his authority, and the command fell upon men more eminent by birth, but less distinguished by abilities. The Scots dividing their army into three bodies, took their station at Falkirk, where Edward speedily arriving, defeated them with immense slaughter (1298).^b Wallace's military skill, however, enabled him to retire with his troops behind the river Carron.

F.—Previous to the attack, Wallace is reported to have said to his men, "I haif brocht you to the king," (or ring, for the word is disputed,) "hoppe gif you can,"

* Henning.

^b Ibid.

that is, fight, for you cannot flee.* Just before the battle, as Edward was about to mount his horse, the animal, frightened by the noise, threw him on the ground; and with a kick, broke two of his ribs;^b but such was the ardour of his spirit, that this accident did not detain him from the field; yet the victory, however complete, did not decide the fate of Scotland; the English were obliged to retire for want of provision, and the Scots still maintained their contest for independence.

F.—During this interval, the Pope having been solicited by the Scots, interfered in their behalf; the pontiff represented to Edward in various arguments, the unreasonableness of his pretensions, with considerable force and truth, but with a singular and ridiculous confidence, ended his appeal by claiming the kingdom of Scotland as a fief of the Holy See, which claim, though never before heard of, he asserted to be full, entire, and derived from the most remote antiquity.^c

P.—The conduct of his holiness, cannot fail to remind us of the referee in the fable, of the two litigants and the oyster.

F.—Edward quickly answered the Pope, with arguments equally cogent: he deduces the feudal superiority of England from the age of Brutus the Trojan, and the example of his descendants, and he lays great stress upon the victories of King Arthur, beginning all this rhodomontade with an appeal to the Almighty searcher of hearts.^d

P.—A king who cites chronicles in support of his pretensions gives room to suspect a great deficiency of records.

A.—The Scots having newly chosen, as Regent,

* Walsingham. Heming. ^b Heming. ^c Rymer, vol. 2. ^d Ibid.

John Comyn, of Badenoch, and gaining some advantages, Edward had again occasion to renew his enterprise, and he sat himself down before the castle of Stirling (1304). During the siege, as he carelessly exposed his person to danger, some one recommended him to be more cautious; but he answered by quoting part of the ninety-first Psalm: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee."^a

P.—A strange application of scripture to private feeling. Edward might have thought of his broken ribs at Falkirk.

F.—An incident in Edward's youth gave a devotional tendency to his mind: playing one day at chess with a knight in his chamber, he suddenly rose by some unconscious impulse, when the next moment an immense stone fell from the ceiling on the place which he had just occupied.^b The king also had once a narrow escape from lightning, a dreadful flash passing him and his queen as they sat upon the bed, and killing two ladies in the apartment (1280).^c

A.—At the surrender of Stirling Castle, one of those picturesque scenes occurred which make a deeper impression than the general conflict of a sanguinary battle. One morning the gates were opened and the governor, Sir William Oliphant, with twenty-five of his companions, were seen moving in slow procession down the hill, barefoot, in their shirts, with their hair dishevelled and halters round their necks: when Edward met them, they fell on their knees, and with uplifted hands implored his favour. "I have no favour for you," he replied; "you must surrender at pleasure." To which they assented. "Then," said he, "my plea-

^a Mat. Westm.

^b Walsingham.

^c Ibid.

sure is, that you be hanged as traitors: accept ye this?" "Sir," answered Oliphant, "we acknowledge our guilt; our lives are at your disposal." "And what say you?" rejoined the king, addressing himself to the others. "We are all guilty," they exclaimed: "we all throw ourselves upon your mercy." The king turned away to wipe the tears from his eyes, and ordered them to be conducted as prisoners, but not in chains, to England.*

A.—Edward pursued his advantages with vigour and, to complete his success, had the good fortune to surprise Sir William Wallace, whose spirit he had never been able to subdue. This capture was somewhat singular: Wallace, long continuing a predatory warfare, had hitherto foiled the attempts of this mighty monarch to secure his person; but at length he was betrayed by his friend, Sir John Monteith, to whom he had entrusted the place of his concealment.^b

F.—The common tale is, that he was taken unawares one night, whilst in the company of his mistress, through the treachery of his servant, Jack Short,^c whose brother he had slain, and who on that account was the more inclined to do his master this ill office.

A.—Wallace was carried in chains to London, placed at the bar of Westminster Hall, having a crown of laurel on his head, and was arraigned for the crimes of treason, murder, and robbery; these charges he admitted, save that of treason, inasmuch as he had never sworn fealty to the king of England, and he was executed^d on Tower Hill (1303) by the usual mode of beheading and quartering, with every aggravation of cruelty and indignity. Thus to his last moments he asserted that independence which a whole nation had renounced.

P.—Is it not extraordinary that Edward should

^b Heming.

^b Walsingham.

^c Fordun.

^d Mat. Westm.

have pardoned, favoured, and even trusted, persons who had often made and as often violated their engagements, whilst the man who had never acknowledged his sovereignty fell the most conspicuous victim of his resentment?

A.—That stubborn resistance to Edward's pretensions might constitute the unpardonable offence of Wallace; and yet when the rest of his countrymen made their peace with Edward, the interests of Wallace were not forgotten: it was agreed that he might put himself on the pleasure and grace of the king, if he thought proper;* but he did not think proper: perhaps he might justly distrust the sincerity of Edward, and whether we call his conduct obstinacy, or patriotism, or prudence, to this we must attribute his punishment.

F.—To his execution, perhaps, Wallace owes as much of his celebrity as to his exploits. His unworthy fate excited the sympathy and animated the vengeance of the Scottish nation; and henceforward the huts and glens, the forests and mountains, which he had frequented became consecrated in the eyes of posterity as the sacred memorials of his fame.

P.—In the west of Scotland, the stones on which he sat, the tree in which he was secreted, the rock from which he plunged into the sea, the bridge which he crossed, the forest to which he withdrew, the foaming cascade behind which he was once screened, the barn in which he was taken, and the lake into which he hurled his sword when overpowered by his foes, are still fondly remembered and pointed out by his admiring countrymen.

A.—Wallace was, without doubt, a bold and brave leader; but perhaps his talents were rather those of a guerilla chief than an accomplished general. The only

* Ryley, *Placita Parl.*

great battles in which he fought were those of Stirling and Falkirk; in the first he was victorious, but must share the glory with Sir Andrew Moray, who was his equal in command; in the latter he was most disastrously defeated.

F.—As the remembrance of his real exploits faded away, fiction was employed to emblazon the character of the hero: his courage was thus said to possess a talismanic power, which assured the victory to his followers. Like a true knight errant he cleaved his foes through *braun and bane* down to the shoulders, never striking off less than an arm or a leg of his adversary at a blow.

P.—To whose recording pen are we obliged for the recital of these romantic achievements?

F.—To that of a certain minstrel called Blind Harry, who flourished about the year 1361.* He is supposed to have collected the traditions of the vulgar respecting Sir William Wallace, though he professes to translate the life of that hero as written by his chaplain, Robert Blair; it would be lost labour to search for the real name or condition of the author, who either knew not his story or who meant to falsify it. His work is called, “The Life and Acts of the most famous and valiant champion, Sir William Wallace, of Ellerslie, maintainer of the liberties of Scotland:” it consists of twelve books in metre, each containing several chapters, with such sort of titles as ‘how Wallace with three thousand men defeated King Edward, at Biggar, with sixty thousand;’ ‘how Wallace slew young Selbie, the constable’s son of Dundee;’ ‘how Wallace burnt the barns of Air, and expelled Bishop Beake out of Glasgow, and slew the lord Percie;’ all which suffi-

* Mackenzie’s Lives, &c.

ciently bespeak an air of romance. The poetry of this northern Homer is not without its merit; and the whole has been ever in prodigious favour with the lower classes in Scotland.

A.—The execution of Wallace did not ensure tranquillity: thrice had Scotland been subdued, and thrice did she revolt; and now in the space of four months was again to be overthrown by a different instrument, a system raised by the incessant labour of fifteen years; but the causes of this event are so differently related by the historians of the two nations, that we know not exactly what to credit or what to disbelieve. The celebrated Robert Bruce, now at the age of twenty-three, and grandson to the original competitor for the Scottish crown, but who had hitherto acted with the English party, first appears upon the scene. In order to embellish their annals,^a the Scottish historians represent Bruce as present at the battle of Falkirk; just before the action, having discovered Wallace by his majestic port, he desired a short conference, in which he reproached that hero with ambition. Wallace replied, that in taking up arms he was not in the least swayed by ambition, his only aim being to free his country, which the great men of the realm suffered to perish by their supineness and jealousy; that the blame lay entirely on the nobility, and chiefly indeed on Bruce himself, who, uniting personal merit with dignity of birth, had deserted the post which both nature and fortune had called him to assume. This reply made so great an impression on the mind of Bruce that he burst into tears.

F.—Notwithstanding this interesting colloquy, it is certain, from the express assertion of English contemporary historians,^b that Bruce was not at that time in

^a Fordun, lib. 6.

^b Trivet. Heming.

Edward's army. In the early period of his life, it may be difficult to vindicate this young man's conduct, unless we conclude that he waited for the proper opportunity of declaring his principles.

A.—After the resignation of Baliol, it is supposed that Edward had cajoled the son of Robert Bruce, the original competitor, now deceased, by an implied promise of the vacant diadem; but when the promise was claimed, the haughty monarch replied "Am I to conquer kingdoms for you?"^a By the demise of this person, his son, young Robert, having succeeded to the rights of his family, naturally considered himself as the lawful heir of the throne against the pretensions of the house of Baliol, whose imbecility had estranged the affection of the Scots; excited with these views of personal ambition, as well as contemplating the delivery of his enslaved country, he ventured to disclose his intentions to John Comyn, of Badenoch, the regent of Scotland under Edward.^b This nobleman, being the nephew of Baliol, had a better title by blood than the youthful aspirant; but dissembling his disapprobation, he appeared cordially to acquiesce in his designs. After a short period, Bruce returning to England, Comyn, as it is supposed, sent intelligence to Edward, who contented himself for the present by setting spies upon Bruce's conduct, with the expectation of seizing his three brothers, who then resided in Scotland; but this monarch, usually so discreet, one night over his bottle unwarily betrayed his intention of putting the whole family to death.

P.—At length then an instance of weakness is discovered in the invulnerable character of Edward.

A.—A nobleman of Edward's court being thus ap-

^a Fordun, lib. 11.

^b Fordun, lib. 12.

prized of Bruce's danger, but not daring amidst so many jealous eyes to hold any conversation with his friend, sent him by a servant a pair of gilt spurs and twelve silver pennies, which he pretended to have borrowed, leaving it to the sagacity of Bruce to discover the meaning.^a Treasonable intentions are sufficiently apprehensive, and Bruce immediately contrived the means of escape: as the ground was thickly covered with snow, he ordered the shoes of his horses to be inverted that he might deceive those who endeavoured to track his route, and he fled with such speed that, though he travelled chiefly through bye-roads, he reached in seven days his castle of Loch-Maben, in Dumfriesshire. On the way he met a traveller of suspicious appearance, whom having killed, he found on his person letters from Comyn to the king, which plainly evinced that he had betrayed Bruce's intentions.

P.—These particulars are credible enough, though it be admitted that they possess a romantic tinge.

A.—The incident which follows is chiefly the object of doubt and dispute: at Dumfries, Bruce found many of the Scottish nobles assembled: he is represented as disclosing to them his intention of assuming the Scottish crown, in which he was vehemently opposed by Comyn. Bruce, already apprized of the treachery of the regent, followed him from the assembly, showed him the intercepted letters, and receiving from him the lie, attacked him with his sword, and left him for dead; immediately meeting one of his own friends, Sir Thomas Kirkpatrick, Bruce exclaimed, "I think that I have killed Comyn." "And is that a matter to be left to conjecture?" replied Kirkpatrick; "I will secure him:" and drawing his dagger, stabbed Comyn through the heart.^b

^a Fordun, lib. 12.

^b Walsingham. Hemingf. Knyghton. Fordun.

F.—All that is absolutely known of this affair is, that an interview of the two chieftains took place in the convent of the Friars Minors at Dumfries (Feb. 10, 1306). What was said must ever remain a secret, as none were present; but all the historians however agree, that the parties from words proceeded to blows; that Bruce struck Comyn with his foot, and then wounded him with his dagger; and that Kirkpatrick rushing in put him to death.

A.—The treachery of Comyn has never been certainly ascertained; it may have been invented to lessen the guilt of bloodshed in the character of Bruce, and thus to justify a transaction which led to the recovery of Scotland: that the deed itself was not considered dishonourable, we may conclude, from the family of Kirkpatrick taking for their crest a hand with a bloody dagger, and adding the motto, “I will secure him,” which they retain to this day. The quarrel may have casually originated between two proud spirited rivals, though, after the slaughter, necessity compelled Bruce to assert his pretensions to the crown.

P.—Bruce knew the character of Edward too well to expect pardon for such an offence.

A.—The Scots had now no alternative but to shake off the English yoke, or perish in the attempt. Bruce, flying to different quarters, got possession of many of the castles, and was at length solemnly inaugurated at Scone, the crown being placed on his head by the Countess of Buchan,* who afterwards severely felt the effects of this exploit.

F.—After the ceremony Bruce observed to his lady, “Yesterday we were earl and countess, to day we are king and queen.” To which she replied, “You may be a summer king, but I suppose you will not be a

* Mat. Westm.

winter king.”^a With which contemptuous speech the new monarch was excessively enraged.

A.—For the first year the lady’s remark was truly prophetic, for Edward, with his usual rapidity of action, sent Aymer de Valence with a considerable force to Scotland, to stop the progress of the malcontents; and this nobleman falling unexpectedly upon Bruce, totally defeated his army; and the young king, reduced to the lowest ebb of fortune, was compelled to take shelter in the western isles: here, for a considerable period, his only food were herbs and roots, and water his only drink: his shoes being worn off his feet, he wandered barefoot.^b In this melancholy interval, his three brothers, with many of his partizans, were taken and executed; his wife and the Countess of Buchan were imprisoned: the latter is said to have been confined in a cage, in which she could not stand upright; but was exposed to the ridicule of every passer-by, being hung out on the wall of Berwick Castle.

P.—Do you mean in the same way as we hang out a cage containing a squirrel or a parrot?

F.—It was commonly thought so, Edward’s declaration being, that “the countess should be shut up in a stone and iron chamber, circular as the crown she gave, and that she should be suspended in the open air, a spectacle to travellers for her everlasting infamy:”^c but the real order to the chamberlain of Scotland, still extant,^d directs that the countess should be attended by servants of both sexes; and the cage seems to have been nothing more than a latticed apartment in one of the turrets of the castle, where the lady might be retained in security, and in which she passed a captivity of several years.

A.—Edward now assembled a great army; and for the purpose of giving more eclat to his expedition,

^a Mat. Westm.

^b Fordun.

^c Mat. Westm.

^d Rymer, vol. 1.

knighted his eldest son. Immediately after receiving that honour, the Prince of Wales went in procession to Westminster Abbey, ascended the high altar, and knighted three hundred young nobles, who were all appalled in embroidered robes of gold; at the conclusion of this ceremony two swans, adorned with trappings and bells of gold, were brought by minstrels, in nets of the same metal, with great pomp into the church, and the king took a solemn oath, by the God of heaven and by these swans, that he would march into Scotland, and never return, till he had punished the rebels and avenged the death of John Comyn.*

F.—This is one of those strange combinations of affected piety with real profaneness which the records of chivalry so often exhibit.

A.—The courage of Bruce had not deserted him: whilst lurking in the isle of Arran, he despatched a person into Carrick to learn how his vassals in that territory stood affected to their ancient lord, enjoining the messenger, that if he found the disposition of the people to be favourable, he should make a signal by lighting a fire upon an eminence in the castle of Turnberry. From the dawn of the appointed day, Bruce had stood with his eyes fixed on the coast of Carrick; noon had already passed, when he perceived the much desired signal of smoke on the eminence; he flew to his boat, and hastening over, night surprised him and his associates, while yet at sea: steering by the light of the fire, they reached the shore, where they were met by the messenger, who reported there was no hope, as the country was entirely occupied by enemies. "Traitor," cried Bruce, "why did you make the signal?" "I made no signal," replied the man; "but observing a fire on the eminence, I feared that it might

* Mat. Westm.

deceive you, and I hastened hither to warn you from the coast.”^a Bruce hesitated at the danger; but at length determined to attack the English, carelessly cantoned in the neighbourhood, many of whom he put to the sword and pillaged their quarters.

P.—We can easily imagine the rage of Edward on receiving this information.

A.—Breathing out threatenings and slaughter, that monarch reached sight of the Scottish hills, and though labouring with sickness still kept pace with his army; but at Burgh on the Sands, five miles from Carlisle, he was overtaken by a greater conqueror, and expired in his tent (July 7, 1307), in the sixty-ninth year of his age, and the thirty-fifth of his reign;^b hated and dreaded by his neighbours, but extremely beloved and revered by his own subjects.

F.—This monarch has always been considered as the model of a politic and warlike king. In point of ability he stands at the head of the list of English sovereigns; yet it is observable, that his ambitious policy towards Scotland, being founded on palpable injustice, produced no advantage to his kingdom, but laid the foundation of a violent and lasting animosity, equally injurious to both countries, and which even at the present hour, after the reciprocation of mutual benefits for two centuries, is scarcely extinguished: the spirit-stirring appeal,

Scots wha ha' wi' Wallace bled,

still arousing a spark of national feeling.

A.—But the advantage of uniting the two kingdoms under one head was so apparent, that posterity, too indulgent indeed to the projects of ambition, has not regarded the conduct of Edward with perhaps sufficient severity.

^a Barbour, book 4.

^b Walsing.

P.—But surely it is dangerous to sanction the maxim, that expediency justifies the strong in his aggression of the weak.

A.—The personal courage and military skill of Edward were equally conspicuous. He was industrious, frugal, temperate, and chaste; exemplary in all the relations of domestic life; of an advantageous figure, being remarkably tall, strong, and graceful, except in the great length and smallness of his legs, which obtained for him the sobriquet of Longshanks; his hair was yellow in his youth,^a grey in age; his forehead large, and all his features regular; he had a slight impediment in his speech; his good sense and understanding were unquestionable; he rigorously maintained his authority against his turbulent barons, but knew well how to recede when in danger.

F.—There are two instances exemplifying this judicious self-control: the first, when Edward issued an enquiry into the titles by which the barons held their estates, in which he was stopped by the spirited interference of Earl Warenne,^b who being requested to produce his title, drew an old rusty sword from its scabbard: "This (said the baron) is the instrument by which my ancestors acquired their estate, and by which I will keep it as long as I live. William the Bastard did not conquer the kingdom for himself alone, and my ancestor was a joint adventurer in that enterprize." The other instance was, when Humfrey Bohun, earl of Hereford, the constable, and Roger Bigod, earl of Norfolk, the Marshal of England, refused to command the king's forces in Guienne, as not required by their feudal tenures: though Edward was so much exasperated as to exclaim, "By the eternal God, Sir Earl,

^a Walsingham.

^b Heming.

you shall either go or hang;" but being coolly answered by Hereford, "By the eternal God, Sir King, I will neither go nor hang," Edward prudently desisted from a contest.*

A.—But the great glory of Edward's reign, are the advantages which the English nation still derives from his improvements in the law, which have procured for him the title of the English Justinian, and which are dwelt upon by the sages of the legal profession with the highest commendation; but consisting in great measure of technical arrangements, they are not very interesting to the general enquirer: many legal treatises, as those of Bracton and Fleta, written in naughty law latin, as somebody calls it in an old comedy, are authority at this day.

F.—But I do not know that we are to attribute all this improvement solely to the king: many measures of parliament were contrary to his inclination, and were the result of his necessities, being purchased by the vote of a valuable aid; the famous statute *de tallagio non concedendo* was not passed without a violent struggle: this most important act, by vesting the right of raising the supplies in the parliament, was perhaps of more importance than even Magna Charta itself, and may be considered as the greatest victory hitherto gained by the people against the despotic prerogative of the crown; and from the same necessity, of a large supply for the war in Scotland, Edward consented most unwillingly to renew the charters.

A.—Yet it must be allowed, that many most advantageous measures originated solely with the king. Edward, aware that merely enacting good laws was but of small utility unless they were duly administered,

* Heming.

brought the judges to trial for malversation in their office, all of whom except two were convicted of flagrant corruption, and most heavily fined and deposed.^a The clergy too were made to feel in this reign, that their pretended immunities were no exemption from contributing their quota to the necessities of the state: in vain they pleaded, that the Pope had prohibited them from paying taxes levied upon their order without his consent; and Winchelsey, archbishop of Canterbury, plainly told the king that, in the double obedience which the clergy owed to two sovereigns, their duty compelled them to yield to the superior pretensions of their spiritual father.^b

P.—It is not to be supposed that a prince like Edward would understand the force of such logic.

A.—And consequently, in reply, he as plainly told the archbishop, that since the clergy refused to support the civil government, they were unworthy of receiving any benefit from it; and orders were immediately issued to the judges to hear no causes brought before them by that order of men, but to decide those in which they appeared as defendants. The ecclesiastics soon found themselves in the most miserable situation, they could not remain in their convents for want of subsistence, and if they went abroad, they were pillaged by every ruffian who chose to attack them: the spirit of the clergy at length gave way, and they agreed to a composition,^c this new species of martyrdom possessing no eclat in this world, nor the expectation of a crown of glory in the next.

F.—The result was sufficiently equitable, yet the mode is scarcely reconcilable to the principles of a free or legal constitution: a more just measure was the

^a T. Wykes.

^b Heming.

^c Ibid.

celebrated statute of Mortmain, which prevented the clergy from receiving any new acquisition of lands by will or testament, which, as according to the ecclesiastical canons, they could never alienate, they would in time have engulfed all the land in the kingdom.

A.—At this period the English constitution can scarcely be considered as free, nor were many of the acts of its government strictly legal; but the dawn of a brighter day appeared, in the establishment of the Commons as a part of the parliament, called together, not as in the former reign by an unprincipled leader, but by an able, powerful, and enlightened monarch.

F.—The rise and progress of the House of Commons commands the peculiar attention of the English nation, springing at first from small beginnings, like the Nile in its fountain, but swelling gradually into a majestic stream, diffusing fertility and blessings to a grateful country.

A.—The comparison may be carried a step further: like that noble river, the House of Commons in its origin is peculiarly obscure; we have already seen, that the first introduction of deputies from the towns was by the Earl of Leicester (1265); the practice was discontinued by Edward in his several parliaments till 1283, when he summoned his great barons, both temporal and spiritual, to meet at Shrewsbury, for the purpose of consulting about “what was fit to be done” with the unfortunate David, the captive prince of Wales, and “about other matters.” In addition to the nobility, were joined two knights from each shire, and two burgesses from twenty-one principal cities and boroughs, the earliest specimen in which that order of men is mentioned as connected with parliament in the reign of Edward the First.

P.—Which were the twenty-one towns thus distinguished?

A.—They were the following:^a

London	Canterbury	Lynn
Winchester	Carlisle	Colchester
Newcastle upon Tyne	Norwich	Yarmouth
York	Northampton	Hereford
Bristol	Nottingham	Chester
Exeter	Scarborough	Shrewsbury
Lincoln	Grimsby	Worcester.

F.—But if this be the first time that any burgesses were summoned by Edward to parliament, what is meant by the preamble to the statutes, passed at Westminster in 1275, declaring, “These be the acts of King Edward, made at his first parliament after his coronation, by his council, and by the assent of the archbishops, bishops, abbots, priors, earls, barons, and the commonalty of the realm, *la cominaltè de la terre*, being thither summoned.”

A.—We have already seen from a clause in Magna Charta,^b what orders of men constituted the great council of the kingdom at that period. And hence I conclude, that “*la cominaltè de la terre*,” in the reign of Edward, means the same as “all others who hold of us in chief,” in the reign of John. Those tenants who held smaller portions of land than a whole barony, as they were immediate vassals of the crown, were entitled, by the principles of the feudal law, to a seat in the national councils equally with the greatest barons; but becoming numerous through the multiplied alienation of estates during the crusades, it was provided by Magna Charta, that while the great barons should be summoned by writ, the smaller should be called

^a Rymer, vol. 2.

^b Vol. 1, p. 411.

by a general summons of the sheriff. To exact the attendance of the whole would have produced confusion; they were therefore required to choose in each county a certain number of their own body, commonly two, but often more, who should represent the authority of the whole: this expedient had been practised at different times in the reign of Henry the Third; and as these knights of the shire were of equal rank with the great barons, it gave no surprize to see them sitting in the same assembly: to this class, the immediate vassals of the crown, as forming a part of the first parliament of Edward, and to this class only, can the term "*cominaltè de la terre*," with any propriety be applied. Since the introduction of the representatives of the cities and boroughs to parliament, the "*Commons*," doubtless, indicate a different order of men; but from the general poverty and insignificance of the inhabitants of the towns, in the previous period of the English history, it is but too palpable that they could never pretend to a place in the national councils, not even in the Anglo Saxon *Wittenagemot*, and much less in the *commune concilium* of the Anglo-Norman Princes, though this opinion passed at one time for a surrender of popular principles, and almost amounted to a breach of privilege.

F.—The subject was smartly contested by the historians, Brady and Tyrrel, at the end of the century before the last; and I must own, that, with every inclination to do justice to the research of the latter writer, I am compelled to conclude, that he has totally failed in establishing his point; the only phrase or expression which he has adduced, that can by any feasibility be tortured into the meaning of representatives from the boroughs, being the "*Procuratores*

Patriæ," mentioned in a charter of Athelstan to the Abbey of Abingdon, together with bishops, abbots, dukes, and earls, in whose presence it was granted: but why these persons should be so considered, is not very easy to understand, it being much more probable that they were the considerable *titanes*.

A.—Indeed, since the publication of Mr. Hume's history, his arguments, as condensed in his second appendix, seem to have decided the controversy; and it is now generally admitted, that deputies from the towns were unknown in English history, till their introduction by the Earl of Leicester to the parliament of 1265. The small sprinkling of the Commons in the parliament convened at Shrewsbury (1283), led the way to a more complete representation of the kingdom, in the twenty-third year of Edward the First (1295), who, in addition to the barons, prelates, and knights of the shire, summoned to parliament deputies from one hundred and twenty-four cities and boroughs.

P.—As we have seen which twenty-one towns in the kingdom were considered as the most important, by their being called on to send representatives to the parliament at Shrewsbury, a list of the boroughs which were now summoned would be equally satisfactory, as indicating what towns were next in the scale of wealth or population.

A.—In this parliament thirty-five counties only returned knights: Chester and Durham, being counties palatine, seem omitted, as being governed by their own lords; Buckingham and Rutland were probably neglected on the account that they contained no large towns; and Monmouth was considered as part of Wales, which principality did not return members till

the reign of Henry the Eighth. The following list will show the returns :^a

<i>Counties.</i>	<i>Towns.</i>	<i>Counties.</i>	<i>Towns.</i>
Bedford . . .	Bedford	Norfolk . . .	{ Norwich Lynn
Berks . . .	{ Reading Wallingford	Northampton .	{ Yarmouth Northampton
Cambridge .	{ Cambridge Ely*	Northampton .	{ Newcastle upon Tyne
	{ Launceston Leskard	Northumber- land . . .	{ Bamburgh* Corbrigg*
Cornwall . .	{ Truro Bodmin Helston Tregony Carlisle	Notts . . .	Nottingham
	{ Cockermouth	Oxon . . .	Oxford
Cumberland .	{ Egremond*	Salop . . .	{ Shrewsbury Bridgenorth
Derby . . .	Derby		{ Bristol Bath Wells
	{ Exeter Totness	Somerset . .	{ Taunton Bridgewater Axbridge*
Devon . . .	{ Barnstaple Plimpton Tavistock Torrington*		{ Southampton Winchester Portsmouth Andover
	{ Dorchester	Southampton, or Hants . .	{ Yarmouth, Isle of Wight Newport Alresford* Alton* Basingstoke* Overton*
Dorset . . .	{ Lyme Bridport Shaftsbury Blandford*	Stafford . . .	Stafford
Essex . . .	Colchester	Suffolk . . .	{ Ipswich Dunwich Orford
Gloucester . .	Gloucester		{ Southwark Bletchingley Ryegate Guildford
	{ Hereford	Surrey . . .	{ Chichester Horsham Lewes
Hereford . .	{ Leominster Weobly Ledbury*	Sussex . . .	{ Shoreham Bramber Arundel
Hertford . .	Hertford		{ Warwick Coventry
Huntingdon .	Huntingdon	Westmoreland,	Appleby
	{ Canterbury Rochester Tunbridge*		
Kent . . .	{ Lancaster Preston Wigan Liverpool		
Lancaster . .	Leicester		
Leicester . .	{ Lincoln Grimsby Stamford		
Lincoln . . .	London		
Middlesex . .			

^a Browne Willis, *Notitia Parliamentaria*.

<i>Counties.</i>	<i>Towns.</i>	<i>Counties.</i>	<i>Towns.</i>
	New Sarum		Evesham
	Old Sarum		Kidderminster*
	Wilton	Worcester,	Bromsgrove*
	Downton	<i>continued</i>	Dudley*
	Calne		Pershore*
	Devizes		York
Wilts . .	Malmsbury		Scarborough
	Marlborough		Thirsk
	Chippenham		Malton
	Cricklade		Heddon
	Bedwin	York . . .	Rippon
	Ludgershall		Pontefract
	Bradford*		Beverley
	Mere*		Jervall*
Worcester .	Worcester		Pickering*
	Droitwich		Tykehill*

This parliament thus consisted of somewhat above three hundred members: those places marked with a star, twenty-two in number, have lost their privileges from neglect. Before the end of Edward's reign thirty-nine* other boroughs were summoned, about half of which have since discontinued to return members. The present increase of the House of Commons has been added at various times and from various circumstances. The occasion of Edward's appeal to the nation was the lowness of his exchequer, caused by the multiplied expenses of his various wars. It had been customary with the crown to levy taxes, or talliages, upon its own demesne lands, which included several of the principal cities and boroughs, at its pleasure; but the inconvenience of transacting business with each was much felt, and the king became sensible that the most expeditious way of obtaining a supply would be to assemble deputies, not only from his own demesne boroughs, but from all the chief towns, and to lay before them the necessities of the state, requiring their general consent to his demands. Edward at the same time summoned depu-

* Browne Willis, *Notitia Parliamentaria*.

ties from the inferior clergy; and in his writ to the Archbishop of Canterbury, for that purpose, is to be found the remarkable declaration, "That as it is a most equitable rule with princes, that what concerns all should be approved by all, so dangers common to all should be obviated by the assistance^a of all."

F.—An admirable principle, which posterity will do well constantly to remember.

A.—Of the transactions or the forms of this extraordinary assemblage of the states of the realm but little is known. There appears to have been but one house of parliament; yet as the barons voted an eleventh, the clergy a tenth, and the burgesses a seventh of their moveables,^b they probably decided in separate chambers. The burgesses, as they were really inhabitants of the towns which they represented, must have been considered as much too humble an order of men to mix with the nobility and knights; as after they had given their assent to the taxes required of them, they frequently separated, even though the parliament continued to sit.

P.—Is it not extraordinary that, in such a work as Blackstone's Commentaries, an explanation of the origin of the House of Commons should be passed over, on the ground that it is a matter of dispute, though the author is treating expressly of parliament?

A.—A convincing proof of the comparative poverty of the Commons may be found in a return of the county of Bedford in the reign of Edward the Second (1308): the barons granted a twentieth of their moveables, which produced 720*l.* 12*s.* 7*d.*, while the quota of the burgesses, who voted a fifteenth, amounted to no more than 31*l.* 18*s.* 4½*d.* In the same reign (1315),

^a Brady, from the Records.

^b Walsingham.

the fifteenth granted by the lords and knights in the east riding of York amounted to 924*l.* 5*s.* 8*d.*; whilst the tenth, by the cities, burghs, and royal demesnes, produced only 55*l.* 10*s.* 4*d.*^a

F.—In striking contrast to modern practice, the deputies of the towns, and even the knights, were paid for their attendance by the borough or county which returned them. The last member who received any thing in the shape of wages from his constituents, seems to have been the celebrated friend of Milton, Andrew Marvel,^b returned by the town of Hull in the reign of Charles the Second.

P.—At what period did the national council of England first assume the name of parliament?

F.—The word is evidently French, and signifies *colloquium*, or conference. Sir Edward Coke ridiculously derives it from *parler le ment*—to speak your mind; another absurd etymology is from *parium lamentum*,^c because at these meetings the peers did complain to each other of the enormities of the times. The term was first applied to that assembly of prelates and barons in France, to whom St. Bernard preached the second crusade, about the middle of the twelfth century.^d The earliest mention of the word parliament in English law is in the preamble to the Statute of Westminster, in the third year of Edward the First (1272);^e but it had grown into common use throughout the last half of the preceding reign. The term occurs in the summons to Leicester's parliament (1265).^f

A.—The origin of corporations, which at length entitled cities and boroughs to send members to par-

^a Carte, vol. 2, page 308, from the Rolls.

^b Biog. Brit.

^c Buck. Life of Rich. III.

^d Mod. Universal Hist. vol. 23, p. 307.

^e Blackstone, book 1, c. 2.

^f Rymer, vol. 1.

liament, is involved in the same obscurity as the commencement of the House of Commons itself. I will not positively assert, with some antiquaries, that no incorporations existed previously to the conquest, but certainly if they existed at all their number was but few. A city in England means a town corporate, that is or has been the seat of a bishop. The meaning of the word borough is more difficult to explain: by some it is derived from the Greek *πύργος*—a tower; others assert that *berg* is a pure German word, meaning a street or row of houses; but as every small town was not a borough, I am inclined to derive the name from *burgum*,^a a Latin word of the middle ages, signifying a fort, or place of strength; and in this I am the more confirmed, as many places terminate in burgh or bury, which do not appear to have been a collection of houses: two instances, Highbury and Canonbury, in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, will serve for an example, both being situated on a rising ground, and probably possessing some work of defence. The boroughs were mostly demesne lands of the crown, and gradually obtained from the Norman kings the privilege of incorporation with a separate jurisdiction, to protect them against the tyrannical encroachment of the neighbouring lords. The burgesses having thus obtained liberty of trade and the farming of their own tolls, began at length to rear their head, and to obtain wealth and political consideration.

F.—But we should err greatly if we imagined that Edward promoted the prosperity of the third estate from a regard to what we now call the liberty of the subject; as, though he was desirous that his subjects should do justice to each other, he endeavoured to have his own hands free in all his transactions; and we may

^a Vegetius apud Ducange.

fairly conclude, that he little foresaw that the power of the purse would ultimately draw to itself the chief direction of affairs.

A.—Yet we may say of Edward, as Fuller^a remarks with his frequent happy quaintness, “A worthy prince he was, fixed in his generation, betwixt a weak father and son, as if made wise and valiant by their *antiperistasis*; and as his arm was first accounted the measure of a yard in England, so his actions are an excellent model and a praiseworthy platform for succeeding princes to imitate.” Edward left by Eleanor of Castile only one son, Edward; of their many daughters, most died in their infancy. By his second wife, Margaret of France, he left two sons: first, Thomas de Brotherton, born at a village in Yorkshire of that name, created earl of Norfolk, and from whom, by females, the house of Howard is descended; and second, Edmond, earl of Kent.

^a Church Hist.

DISSERTATION VIII.

SECTION II.

EDWARD II. - - - - - A.D. 1307.

A.—EDWARD, the valiant and the wise, expires in his tent with the promised land of Scotland before his eyes, but of which, in the way of conquest, neither himself nor his posterity was ever to take possession. A little before his dissolution, he called for his son, the Prince of Wales, and gave him, as is usual on such occasions, plenty of good advice, which was received, as is also too usual in expectant heirs, with apparent conviction of its excellence, but with a fixed determination to disregard its injunctions. The dying king enjoined young Edward to send his heart into the Holy Land, to carry his body into Scotland with the army, and not to bury it till a complete conquest had been made of that country.^a

F.—Some chroniclers assert^b that, to diminish the inconvenience of this command, he directed that his flesh should be boiled from off his bones. Edward also exacted an oath from the prince,^c that he would never recall from exile Piers Gaveston, whom the prudent father, foreseeing the evil consequences of his son's excessive intimacy with that favourite, had sent into banishment.

A.—The father of Piers Gaveston was a Gascon knight, who, having honourably served his sovereign, obtained in reward for his merits a situation for his son in the household of the Prince of Wales: the youth was endowed with the utmost elegance of figure and

^a Walsingham.^b Froissart.^c Walsingham.

beauty of countenance; he was distinguished by his graceful mien and his address in all martial exercises; and he possessed a lively wit, frequent in his countrymen, which, though agreeable enough in conversation, was but little calculated to govern a state. Gaveston soon insinuated himself by the most obsequious flattery into the affections of his master; and a similar taste in dissipation and pleasure cemented, as they advanced in age, the attachment of their more early years.*

P.—A wise man like Edward the First might have foreseen how nugatory a promise of banishment, under such circumstances, was likely to be esteemed.

A.—The young king, absorbed in the desire of beholding his absent friend, neglected to pursue his advantages against Scotland, and after some feeble efforts returned to the south, and disbanded his numerous army; thus unexpectedly saving Robert Bruce and his kingdom from what appeared inevitable destruction.

F.—It is curious to observe how sometimes the wisdom of the wise is confounded by the excess of its over precautions; had Gaveston, who really possessed both spirit and talents, been suffered to remain with young Edward, he might probably have instigated his master to attempt some brilliant action, which would at least have increased his own ascendancy, as well as contributed to its security.

A.—His ascendancy scarcely admitted increase: Edward, solely intent upon gratifying the favourite, even before his arrival in England endowed him with the earldom of Cornwall, which had escheated to the crown,^a and soon after gave him in marriage his own niece;^c to these favours was added the whole Isle of Man; and the king seemed to live for no other purpose

* T. de la Moor.

^b Rymer, vol. 3.

^c T. de la Moor.

than that of pleasing and enriching Gaveston, who in return supplied him with those frivolous amusements which suited his character, and nothing was regarded but a succession of balls, banquets, and tournaments, in all which the favourite shone with unprecedented splendour, and eclipsed the wealthiest and proudest of the nobility.

P.—Hinc illæ lachrymæ! an offence not to be forgiven.

A.—Gaveston, instead of disarming envy by his moderation, deemed no circumstance of his fortune so agreeable as that of mortifying his rivals; by his superior address in tilting, he had at various times unhorsed the Earls of Lancaster, Hereford, Pembroke, and Warrenne;^a not content with this superiority, he had the insolence to stigmatize many of these powerful barons by nicknames:^b the Earl of Lancaster, of blood royal, was called sometimes the Stage Player, sometimes the Old Hog; the Earl of Pembroke was Joseph the Jew; the Earl of Gloucester the Cuckold's Bird; and the Earl of Warwick the Black Dog of Ardenne: but the Black Dog swore that the favourite should feel his teeth,^c a threat which was fatally realized.

F.—The common people, who were provoked by Gaveston's overweening ostentation, treated his pretensions with derision, and would never call him other than Piers Gaveston; in consequence a ridiculous proclamation was issued, commanding all men to give him the title of Earl of Cornwall in common conversation.^d

A.—The king was now about to take a consort; and leaving Gaveston regent in his absence, made a journey to France, for the purpose of doing homage for Guienne,

^a Leland, Collect. vol. 2.

^b Walsingham.

^c Leland, Collect. vol. 2.

^d Mon. Malmesb.

and espousing Isabella, daughter of Philip the Fair, "the most beautiful lady in the world," as Froissart calls her, and equally celebrated for her intrigues as for her beauty. On the return of the royal train to England, it met the regent Gaveston, when, to the great astonishment of all present, the king, neglecting every body else, with unexampled folly rushed into the arms of the favourite, kissed him, and called him brother.^a The coronation soon followed, which was celebrated with extraordinary magnificence. Edward allowed Gaveston to carry the crown at the ceremonial,^b in which he outshone not only the nobility, but the king himself, in finery and splendour; which preference and ostentation anew provoked the haughty barons, and they combined for his destruction.

F.—As the coronation oath on this occasion is the first extant in the English records, it is worthy our notice; it was administered by the Bishop of Winchester; the Archbishop of Canterbury, Winchelsey being absent from the kingdom.

"Bishop.—Sire, will you grant and keep, and by your oath confirm to the people of England, the laws and customs granted to them by the ancient kings of England, your predecessors, righteous and devout, namely, the laws, the customs, and the liberties granted to the clergy and people by the glorious king, St. Edward, your predecessor?

"King.—I grant them, and promise to keep them.

"Bishop.—Sire, will you preserve to God, to holy church, to the clergy and people, the peace of God, fully and to the utmost of your power?

"King.—I will preserve it.

"Bishop.—Will you cause to be observed in all

^a Trokelowe.

^b Rymer, vol. 5.

your judgments, equal right and justice, with discretion in mercy and in truth, to the utmost of your power?

“ King.—I will cause it to be observed.

“ Bishop.—Will you promise to keep, and cause to be kept, the laws and good customs, which the commonalty of your kingdom have chosen; and will you defend and protect them to the utmost of your power?

*“ King.—I grant and promise these things.”**

*A.—In the records, a programme of the ceremony of the coronation and the oath to be taken are drawn up in the Latin language; but from the same authority it appears, that the propositions were really put to the king and his answers were made in old French, of which the oath just recited is a literal translation. We have thus the means of clearly explaining a disputed meaning of the Latin words in the last question, *quas vulgus elegerit*, which some injudicious whigs have translated, “ which the commonalty shall judge fit to enact;” but the words of the corresponding French phrase being “ la communauté de vostre royaume aura esleu,” “ shall have chosen,” preclude entirely such an interpretation.*

P.—In this early instance of something like a compact between the king and his subjects, supposing a breach of promise in the former to take place, where would be found the remedy?

F.—No monarchical constitution can be expected to declare the point at which resistance becomes a duty; the necessity of the case would bring its own remedy, as Edward fatally experienced.

A.—The barons lost no time in pursuing their designs against Gaveston; and coming armed to parlia-

* Rymer, new edition, by order of Government, vol. 2.

ment, they insisted on his dismissal from the kingdom, on the ground that he had abused the confidence of the king, by obtaining immoderate grants, and taking to his own use the best jewels of the crown: the lords also told Edward that Gaveston's father was executed for being a traitor to the King of France; that his mother was burned for a witch; that Piers himself, in the last reign, was banished for consenting to his mother's witchcraft;^a and that he had now bewitched the king himself.

P.—Such charges, supported by such arguments, were irresistible.

A.—Edward, compelled to submit, with considerable dexterity assisted Gaveston to evade the force of the penalty, by sending him as lord lieutenant to Ireland,^b where he conducted himself with skill and bravery.^c The confederated nobles, mollified by his absence, and brought over by the civilities, grants, and promises of the king, in a few months permitted the favourite to return (1306); but, untaught by experience, he continued in his former course of insolence, levity, and extravagance. The barons again confederated, Gaveston was banished to the continent, and was again recalled; an appeal to arms was the consequence, and the king and his minion retired to the north, in hope of raising an army; but compelled to separate, the latter took refuge in Scarborough Castle, which being ill provided, Gaveston surrendered^d on conditions to the Earl of Pembroke and Henry Percy, who removed him to Deddington Castle, in Oxfordshire; but which conditions, it is lamentable to remark, the barons had not sufficient honour to fulfil, for by the connivance of Pembroke, the castle, on the morning of the 17th June,

^a Stow.

^b Rymer, vol. 3.

^c T. de la Moor.

^d Walsingham.

1312, being beset by Warwick,^a the Black Dog of Ardenne, the garrison made no resistance, and Gaveston was immediately conducted to Warwick Castle. The confederated earls repaired thither, and without regard to the agreement of his capitulation, or any sort of trial, they ordered his execution, which took place at Blacklow Hill, near Warwick. To a proposal to save his life, a voice replied, "You have caught the fox, if you let him go you will have to hunt him again."^b But the death of Gaveston was afterwards avenged with the blood of his persecutors.

F.—This execution was totally indefensible, even if Gaveston had undergone the form of a trial by the barons, as it is difficult to say what law of the land he had broken; for, excepting some dissipation of the public treasure, his only crime seems to have been usurping the chief share in the king's affection.

A.—We cannot but observe, in the character and situation of Gaveston, a striking resemblance to that of Villiers, duke of Buckingham, the great favourite of James the First: the same surpassing beauty of person, the same ebullient vanity, the same profusion, insolence, and levity, the same bravery and skill in martial exercises; their end alike unfortunate—the one falling by the dagger of an assassin, the other by the equally unwarranted punishment of confederate enemies.

P.—Edward had now reigned five years, and we have heard nothing of Scotland since his declining the war with that country at the death of his father.

A.—An equally advantageous position the English could never regain; for in spite of some weak efforts of Edward, the Scots during that interval gradually recovered most of their fortified places, and generally ac-

^a T. de la Moir.

^b Walsingham. Trokelowe.

known Robert Bruce as their sovereign. But at length the factions of England being somewhat appeased by the death of Gaveston, Edward prepared to take vengeance; since the progress of Bruce, though at first viewed with indifference or contempt, was become the object of universal resentment and indignation. A mighty army from all parts of his dominions was collected by Edward, amounting nearly to the number of one hundred thousand men, as the Scottish writers calculate. Its first object was to relieve Stirling Castle, still in the possession of the English, and strongly pressed by the Scottish king, who now understood that the whole force of his adversary would move in this direction.

F.—What Bruce most dreaded was the strength of the English cavalry; he commanded, therefore, in every part where he judged they were likely to have access, that pits should be dug, and so carefully covered over with turf as to be hardly perceptible.^a

A.—On the evening of Midsummer day, 1314, the Scottish army presented itself to the invaders, drawn up on the bank of the burn or little river Bannock, about two miles from Stirling;^b it consisted of thirty thousand veteran soldiers, resolved on death or victory. A desperate skirmish immediately ensued between two bodies of cavalry, in which Robert Bruce, at one stroke of his battle-axe, cleft the head of Henry Bohun, an English knight, to the very chin, in sight of both armies.^c The night, short as it was, appeared long to the expectant combatants: by the Scots^d it was said to be passed in devotion, or mutual exhortation; and by the English in jollity, as they sounded “wassaille and drinkhaile”^e in their cups more than usual.

^a T. de la Moor.

^b Mon. Malmesb.

^c Ibid.

^d Fordun.

^e Sir T. de la Moor.

F.—Surely the historians might have passed over the piety of Scottish soldiers in this age.

P.—Perhaps it was copied from the example of the Normans at the battle of Hastings.

A.—At dawn of day, both armies put themselves in motion. The young Earl of Gloucester, the king's nephew, who commanded the cavalry, falling among the concealed pits, was thrown from his horse and killed;^a this disaster produced great confusion, which Sir James Douglas, who led the van of the Scottish army, observing, immediately made a furious attack, and put the division to total rout. The English infantry, astonished at the defeat of their horse, and seeing, as they supposed, another army marching along the hills, were seized with a panic, and fled in the utmost confusion. This unexpected reinforcement was nothing more than the waggoners and sumpter boys of the Scottish camp, furnished with standards, to give them that appearance.^b Edward exhibited no want of personal courage, and was with difficulty persuaded to quit the field. The victory of the Scots was complete: there fell one hundred and fifty-four English barons and knights, seven hundred gentlemen, and ten thousand common soldiers, at the lowest computation.

F.—No one but the unfortunate Edward could have been by such an inferior force so defeated, and that without any peculiar misconduct or blunder on his own part; he was closely pursued by horsemen, with such eagerness that they never quitted their seats for sixty miles; the royal refugee took shelter in the castle of Dunbar, and thence passed by sea to England.^c

A.—Such was the famous battle of Bannockburn, which is remarkable as being the only great victory

^a T. de la Moor.

^b Fordun.

^c Mon. Malmesb. Fordun.

which the Scots ever obtained against the English; it was highly glorious to Robert Bruce, as it established the independence of his country, and fixed him on the throne of Scotland. The renown and popularity thus acquired have continued the theme of just exultation to every true Scot to the present hour.

F.—National ballads in commemoration of the battle yet remain. On this occasion, says Fabian, the Scots, inflamed with pride, made this rhyme in derision of the Englishmen :

Maydens of Englande, sore may ze mourn,
For your lemmans ze have lost at Bannockysborne,
With hene a low.

What! meneth the king of Englande
So soone to have wonne Scotlande,
With rumby low.

“ This was sung in dances in the carols of the maidens and minstrels of Scotland, many days after, to the reproof and disdain of Englishmen, with divers others, which,” says the old chronicler,“ I pass over.”

A.—Robert Bruce has had the fortune to be celebrated by a bard of considerable merit, John Barbour, archdeacon of Aberdeen, who flourished about sixty years after the event of Bannockburn; the language of this writer is quite as intelligible as that of Chaucer, and the work, though somewhat of the longest, the story being extended through twenty books, unites much historical accuracy with considerable poetical effect; it is entitled “The Acts and Life of the most victorious conqueror, Robert Bruce, king of Scotland,” and it has been equally popular as the Life of Sir William Wallace, by Blind Harry. The following verses, divested of their ancient orthography, are flowing and spirited :

• **Fabian's Chronicle.**

Ah! freedom is a noble thing;
 Freedom makes man to have liking;
 Freedom to all men solace gives:
 He lives at ease who freely lives.

F.—Singular was the fate of Baston,* a Carmelite friar and a professed poet. Being carried by Edward to Scotland for the purpose of celebrating his victory, he was taken prisoner, and Bruce compelled the unfortunate bard to sing the defeat of his master. The poem in Latin verse is still extant: the writer thus unwillingly commences his jingle:

*De planctu cudo, metrum cum carmine nudo,
 Risum retrudo, dum tali themate ludo.*

With groans I hammer out this barren strain:
 With such a theme how can I but complain.

But he prudently disclaims all knowledge of the merit or blame on either side in the quarrel:

Sub quo rege reo, nescio, teste Deo.

Which king is blameable, you'll say it's odd;
 But I am ignorant, so help me God!

P.—So extraordinary a work must have cost infinite labour from the peculiar construction of the metre.

F.—This accumulation of poetical authorities reminds us of Bayle's remark, that a collection of old ballads is no unprofitable companion to the historian.

A.—By the catastrophe of Bannockburn, the English nation was reduced to a deplorable condition: the Scots devastated the northern counties, and also invaded Ireland; and now, in addition to the mortification of defeat, were added the distractions of an unprincipled faction, and the intolerable pressure of the severest famine that has ever afflicted England. During the years 1315, 1316, 1317, the perpetual rains

* Fordun.

and cold weather had not only destroyed the harvests, but had bred a mortality among the cattle, which raised every kind of provision to an enormous price: wheat had advanced to the alarming height of four pounds per quarter, money of that age. Parliament vainly endeavoured to assuage the evil, by fixing a more moderate price to commodities.^a

F.—It is sufficiently clear, as has been happily instanced, that when the quantity of a consumable article falls so far short as to afford full subsistence for nine months only of the year instead of twelve, the only expedient to make it last is to advance the price, which compels the people to put themselves upon short allowance.

A.—Accordingly the parliament soon found the attempt to be impracticable, and repealed their ordinance. The prices which they affixed are somewhat curious:^b for the best stalled ox, twenty-four shillings; other oxen, sixteen shillings; a fat cow, twelve shillings; a fat hog, two years old, three shillings and fourpence; a fat wether, unshorn, twenty pence, if shorn, fourteen pence; a fat goose, twopence halfpenny; a fat capon, twopence; a fat hen, one penny; two chickens, one penny; four pigeons, one penny; two dozen of eggs, one penny. These regulation prices appear to have been those of the market in its usual state.

P.—But they differ so entirely from those of the present time, that I should be gratified to learn what proportion they really bore.

A.—The subject is so obscure and perplexed, that it is pardonable to remain in much uncertainty and ignorance; however, to assist your enquiry, we are first to premise, that the money pound, both in the Saxon

^a Walsingham.

^b Rot. Parl. 7 Ed. II.

times and after the Conquest, till the reign of Edward the Third, contained literally a pound of silver, Tower weight, a trifle less than the pound troy; this pound of silver was coined into two hundred and forty pennies, each weighing twenty-two grains and a half, which were the current coin of the realm, the shilling being merely a denomination of money, and not a coin till the reign of Henry the Seventh. In making the comparison between the value of money in these middle ages and the present time, we must first consider the real weight of the coin mentioned, which was three times heavier than money of the same denomination now; and then, from the rarity of the precious metals before the discovery of the American mines, we must judge how much further the same quantity of silver would go in the purchase of labour and necessary commodities.

F.—The great difficulty lies in our uncertain knowledge of the common prices of the most frequent articles of consumption; in general we may remark, that the necessities of life appear to have been much cheaper and the luxuries much dearer than at present.

A.—Some calculators have supposed, that the efficacy of the same weight of silver, at the period of the Conquest and for some centuries after, was ten times greater than at present. This opinion was thought to overrate the value of ancient money; but as most articles of living have further advanced in price, I think the valuation will now be found sufficiently exact. In the year 1256, Matthew Paris calls a certain sheriff of Northumberland, Sir William Lisle, a rich man, having an estate of one hundred and fifty pounds per annum; if we consider that this sum was equivalent in weight to four hundred and fifty pounds

present money, and if we multiply it by ten, it will produce an income of four thousand five hundred pounds: and now-a-days a high sheriff of a county would not be considered a rich man with a smaller fortune. Another corroboration, perhaps more in point, is the salary usually paid to curates, which we are told, before the year 1348, was four or five marks;^a a mark being worth thirteen shillings and fourpence, the weight of four marks was consequently equal to one hundred and sixty modern shillings, and multiplying this sum by ten, the result will be eighty pounds: a remarkable coincidence with the common emolument now received by that laborious class of the clergy.

P.—Consequently, if we multiply any of these ancient prices by thirty, we shall bring them to an equality with those of the present day.

A.—Just so; or at least from the Conquest to the reign of Edward the Third, when the first reduction was made in the weight of the current coin. In the Saxon times, though the money pound was of the same weight as with the Anglo-Normans, yet that people divided it into forty-eight nominal shillings, and each shilling into five pennies;^b therefore, though the pound and the penny were of the same weight and value both before and after the Conquest, yet the shilling was a totally different sum, the Norman shilling containing twelvepence, the Saxon only fivepence; when, therefore, we read that with the Saxons a sheep was worth a shilling and an ox eight shillings, we must calculate the weight of the former sum as equal only to fifteen pence, and of the latter to no more than ten shillings, modern, which multiplied by ten, the sheep would now produce twelve shillings and sixpence, and the ox five

^a Knyghton.

^b Fleetwood, Chron. Pretiosum.

pounds. These prices prove that domestic animals, which require but little care to rear, were at that time sufficiently cheap: a horse was dearer, being valued at thirty shillings Saxon, equivalent to eighteen pounds. The average price of corn with the Anglo-Saxons is unknown: during a severe famine, in the reign of Edward the Confessor, wheat rose to sixty pennies the quarter,^a which multiplied by thirty, will give seven pounds ten shillings modern value; a high price certainly, but not approaching that of this famine in 1317, to which if we apply our usual scale, we shall find the quarter of wheat at the inaccessible price of one hundred and twenty pounds.

F.—The wonderful fluctuation in price of this first necessary of life, as well as the various prices at different places, must have exposed the nation to great inconvenience. In 1258, a quarter of wheat sold at Northampton for twenty shillings, whilst at Dunstable^b it fetched only six shillings and eightpence; this could not have happened if intelligence had been regular and commercial intercourse at all easy. In contrast to the enormous price of wheat just stated, in 1317, the next price we meet with, a few years after, is only two shillings per quarter, equivalent to three pounds modern; but even from this price, low as it may seem, we may gather, that wheat being a species of manufacture requiring some skill and labour to raise, bore a much higher proportion in value at all times than butchers' meat.

A.—This devouring famine increased the king's unpopularity, though we may conclude that no misconduct on his part could cause or augment such a calamity; but a certain impostor, one John Deydras,^c the

^a Sax. Chron. ^b Chronicle of Dunstable, 1258. ^c Higden, Polychron.

son of a tanner at Exeter, thinking any trifle would cause a revolt, gave out that he was himself the son of the late King Edward, but had been changed at nurse.

P.—Happy for the unfortunate monarch on the throne could this Irish pretension have been substantiated.

A.—But as it failed, the promoter of the imposition was speedily hanged. About this time, as Edward on a certain holiday was dining in public in Westminster Hall,* a woman in a mask, gaily attired, came on horseback and delivered him a letter; the king imagining that it contained something proper to divert him, ordered it to be read aloud; but he was surprised to hear only outrageous reproaches for his cowardice, tyranny, and the various grievances of his reign. The woman being apprehended, confessed that she was bribed to the action by a certain knight.

F.—Nothing can be a greater proof of the general discontent, than that the knight, when interrogated, did not deny the fact, but asserted that, believing the king would read the letter in private, he thought it the properest way to let him know the complaints of his subjects.

A.—The evils of the famine were but temporary, those of a faction, which now sought to govern the kingdom, lasting. Thomas, earl of Lancaster, cousin-german to the king, grandson of Henry the Third, of a haughty and turbulent disposition, was one of the most potent barons that England ever saw, possessing no less than six earldoms, with a proportionable and consequently an immense estate: with this preponderating interest he obtained from parliament an ordinance, by

* Walsingham.

which the government was vested in twelve barons,^a whose power totally eclipsed, if it did not annihilate, the regal authority.

P.—His conduct so far resembled the unprincipled ambition of Simon de Montfort.

A.—Taking advantage of the national misfortunes, Lancaster placed himself at the head of the council, and ruled all things at his pleasure; by his treachery he so directed that no advantage should be gained against the Scots which might confer reputation upon Edward; but he was at length defeated, no unfrequent case with politicians of his class; by an instrument of his own raising: he had promoted against the inclination of the king, Hugh le Despenser, or Spenser, to the office of chamberlain,^b a young man of noble birth, ample fortune, and amiable person, but who, acting by the advice of his father, a nobleman venerable both for his years and character, soon judged that he should better promote his interests by flattering the inclinations of his sovereign, than by continuing the tool of a faction; and consequently, by the most obsequious submission, he soon acquired the same ascendancy which had been exercised by the unfortunate Gaveston.

F.—The king, fully sensible of his own incapacity for serious business, naturally sought to be directed; but every successive favourite seeming to be exalted above his natural rank in the state, excited the envy of the nobility and hatred of the people.

A.—No sooner was the attachment of the king to the two Spensers made known, than the turbulent nobles immediately regarded them as rivals in power, and sought by the most violent means their destruction.^c The younger Spenser having married one of the three

^a Rymer, vol. 3.

^b T. de la Moor.

^c Ibid.

daughters, coheiresses of the great family of Clare, earl of Gloucester, a dispute arose between him and two of the nobility who had married the two other daughters, concerning the division of these large possessions. The transaction was properly the subject of a law-suit, but it excited a civil war: the barons flew to arms, and devastated the estates of the Spensers in various parts of the kingdom,^a and demanded of the king the banishment of these noblemen, both at that time abroad on business of the state. Edward very justly replied, that as the Spensers were not even accused of any crime, his coronation oath restrained him from giving an assent to so illegal a demand.^b

F.—This firmness lasted but a short time, the weak but unfortunate monarch soon yielding to the violence and menaces of his barons.

A.—An incident soon occurred, which, by affording Edward a plausible pretence for raising a military force, released him from this thralldom. The queen going on a pilgrimage to Thomas à Becket's tomb at Canterbury, proposed to lodge during a night at the royal castle of Lodes, in Kent, the custody of which had been committed by the king to Lord Badlesmere, who indeed was absent, but the Lady Badlesmere refused admission to the queen; and during the altercation several of the royal attendants were killed.^c

P.—Her ladyship surely afforded a poor specimen of ancient English hospitality.

A.—The Baron Badlesmere, in a letter to the king, avowed the act of his wife, but no one pretended to justify such unwarrantable insolence. Edward assembling an army, took the castle and hanged the governor, a gentleman of the name of Colepepper; the lady and

^a Murimuth.

^b Walsingham.

^c Ibid.

her children were sent to the Tower; and the baron being soon after taken was executed.^a Edward having now concerted measures with his friends throughout England, threw off the mask, ventured to annul the sentence of banishment against the Spencers, and followed up his advantages with such success, that Lancaster, who had openly formed an alliance with the King of Scots, was defeated and taken prisoner: having been one of the chief promoters of Gaveston's execution, Edward now retaliated by subjecting the earl to the same ignominious punishment.^b

F.—The memory of this nobleman is worth the notice of posterity, only from his extreme opulence; the extent of which we may guess, from the annual consumption in his household of three hundred and seventy-one pipes of wine.^c This immense wealth conferred upon him the power of working considerable mischief: of common-place talent, he sought to gratify his ambition by a turbulent invasion of the laws and peace of the kingdom; his death indeed, by exhibiting one of those extreme reverses of fortune which the English history too frequently presents, attracts our attention. On the 22d of March, 1322, Lancaster was led from his own castle at Pomfret, to a hill about a mile distant, mounted on a lean and sorry jade, and attired in a sordid dress, with a hood placed upon his head; in the way he was pelted by the people with mud, who taunted him with the title of King Arthur, for such name he had assumed in his traitorous correspondence with the Scots. "King of heaven," he exclaimed, "grant me mercy, for the king of earth has forsaken me."^d He then knelt down, with his face to

^a Walsingham.

^b T. de la Moor.

^c Stow, Survey,

^d Leland, Collect. vol. 2.

the east, but he was ordered to turn to the north, that he might look towards his friends, meaning the Scots; and the executioner then finished his office.*

A.—So decided an advantage over the rebellious barons would under any other reign have secured the stability of the government; but Edward's unfortunate choice of his favourites defeated such propitious auspices. The Spensers now returned from exile, seizing for themselves the larger part of the late forfeited estates of Lancaster and other barons, renewed the general feeling of discontent; and such was their insatiable avarice and rapacity, that the nation began to regret even the loss of Gaveston. The younger Spenser having excited the animosity of the queen, she pursued her revenge with such an artful pertinacity as has been seldom exceeded. Isabella altogether despising her husband, became at this time enamoured of Roger Mortimer,^b a young and powerful baron of the western marches, and the decided enemy of the Spensers. This nobleman having been imprisoned in the Tower, had the good fortune to make his escape: during one stormy night, having lulled his keepers by a sleeping draught, which was infused in their wine at a banquet, he broke through the wall of his chamber into the kitchen, from whence getting out by the roof, and using a ladder of cords provided by his friends, he descended; a boat being obtained, he put boldly out to sea, and landed on the continent in safety.^c

P.—I think we may perceive the operation of the queen's gold in this transaction as much as of the narcotic infusion.

A.—Isabella obtained permission to visit Paris, for the purpose of adjusting a dispute between Edward

* Walsingham. Trokelowe.

^b T. de la Moor.

^c Blaneford.

and the French king, her brother, respecting his claims to the feudal superiority of Guienne. During the negotiation, a demand was made that Edward should come over and perform in person the usual homage; but Spenser, foreseeing great inconveniences, either in suffering Edward to leave the kingdom alone, or in accompanying him to Paris, where he well knew he should be exposed to danger from the queen's well-dissembled animosity, started various objections^a to the proposal; and during the delay which they occasioned, he suffered his master to fall into an unsuspected but deadly snare, Isabella having artfully represented to the English council that the king might resign Guienne to his son, now thirteen years of age, whose homage the French monarch would accept as his father's substitute.^b

F.—Such a happy expedient seemed calculated to remove all difficulties and satisfy all objections.

A.—Soon after the arrival in Paris of the young Prince of Wales (1325,) the queen lived with Mortimer in the most declared intimacy; and having now got into her hands the heir of the English monarchy, she resolved on the utter ruin of the king, as well as of the favourite. Edward becoming alarmed, required her speedy return; but she replied, that she would never set foot in England till Spenser was removed for ever from the presence and councils of the king.^c

F.—Edward's letter in answer to his "dame" is still extant: he affirms that her fears of Spenser were a mere pretence; that she had never betrayed the least suspicion in England; that she had taken leave of him as a friend, and during her absence had written letters to him full of professions of esteem. The king goes on

^a Mon. Malmesb.

^b Rymer, vol. 4.

^c Walsingham.

to assert, that since her marriage she had always been treated with honour and kindness; and that if he had sometimes spoken to her words of rebuke, it was always in secret, and because she had deserved them by her follies.* The postscript in the king's letter to the prince, written at the same time, is extremely characteristic, and by no means discreditable to his understanding:

"Edward, Fair Son, *Beaufitz*,

"Though you are of tender age, take our commands tenderly to heart, and perform them humbly and quietly, as you wish to escape our anger and heavy indignation, and as you love your own profit and honour; and follow no advice contrary to the will of your father, as the wise king Solomon teaches you; and send us word immediately what you mean to do, knowing this, that if we find you hereafter disobedient to our will, we will take care that you shall feel it to the last day of your life; and that other sons shall learn from your example not to disobey their lords and fathers."

A.—The conduct of Isabella, strange as it may appear, obtained for her great popularity in England: with consummate address she affianced her son, the Prince of Wales, to Philippa, daughter of the Count of Holland and Hainault;^b and from this new alliance she was supplied with a small army of about three thousand men, and landed with them in Harwich harbour, Sept. 24, 1326: to render her cause more popular, she renewed her declaration, that her purpose was solely to free the king and kingdom from the tyranny of the Spencers.^c By these pretensions three princes

* Rymer, vol. 4.

^b T. de la Moor.

^c Ypod. Neus.

of the blood, many of the nobility, and several of the prelates, were induced to join her party. By the desertion of Robert de Watteville, who was sent to oppose the progress of the malcontents, the unfortunate Edward, after trying in vain to rouse the loyalty of the citizens of London, found himself without resource and departed for the west.^a The elder Spenser, lately created Earl of Winchester, was left governor of Bristol Castle, but the garrison mutinied and delivered him into the hands of his enemies: this venerable nobleman, who had reached his ninetieth year, was instantly, without trial, witness, accusation, or answer, condemned to death; he was hanged in armour on a gibbet, and his body afterwards cut in pieces and thrown to the dogs.^b

F.—He had then indeed reason to repeat the curse which, when compelled to leave the kingdom, he had formerly bestowed upon his son as the cause of his disgrace and misery.^c

P.—But the old nobleman should have recollected that the son originally acted upon his father's counsel.

A.—King Edward, in company with the younger Spenser, took shipping for Ireland, but they were driven back by contrary winds and for some time sought concealment in the mountains of Wales; but at length they were discovered near the monastery of Neath, in Glamorganshire: the king was taken for safe custody to Kenilworth Castle;^d but the favourite, being carried to Hereford, was condemned by the same summary process as his father, and was at once led to execution, being clothed in a black gown, with the arms of the family reversed, and crowned with a wreath of nettles.^e

^a Walsingham.

^b Ibid.

^c Leland, Collect. vol. 2.

^d Walsingham.

^e Knyghton.

F.—But let me whisper a question in your ear: may we not, from the extraordinary particulars related by Froissart of this execution, as well as his gross declaration of the cause, trace the ground of the general animosity to Spenser?

A.—Nothing of the kind appears in the public accusation of the king, of Gaveston, or of Spenser: when an abandoned adúlteress, like Isabella, aided by her paramour, resolves on the ruin of her husband, nothing can be easier than to invent and circulate the most odious insinuations; nor are the cruelties practised on this occasion of the least proof, as according to the same authority,* they were repeated on Mortimer himself when he in turn fell by the hand of the public executioner. A parliament being assembled by Isabella, it drew up a charge against the king in six articles,^b which, though framed by his inveterate enemies, contained little more than an accusation of incapacity for government, of neglecting public business, and of being swayed by evil counsellors.

F.—The frivolous nature of such charges is certainly a better vindication of Edward's government in the eyes of considerate persons, than at this distance of time can otherwise easily be made; and yet in the sixth article there is an obscure and dark allusion.

A.—The parliament having declared that Edward was deposed, proclaimed the young prince Regent: Isabella counterfeited the most violent grief, shedding floods of tears, and repeatedly falling into fits;^c the prince with more sincerity declaring his unwillingness to reign without his father's consent, commissioners were despatched to Edward, at Kenilworth, requiring his resignation: the hapless monarch, as soon as he beheld them, prophetic of his doom, sank down upon

* Froissart. ^b Parl. Hist. vol. 1, from the Records. ^c Walsingham.

the floor in a swoon;* but on recovery replied to their menaces, that he submitted to his fate: one of the deputation, Judge Trussel, in the name of the prelates, earls, barons, and people of England, as their procurator, renounced all homage, fealty, and obedience; and Sir Thomas Blount, high steward, then broke his staff of office, and declared all the king's officers discharged from their service; and thus this extraordinary ceremony ended (Jan. 20, 1327).^b

F.—The people of England, being wrought into a violent rage against Edward, had considered the queen and Mortimer as angels sent from heaven for their deliverance; but as the nature of the connection between these persons became better understood,^c and it was even publicly noticed by the clergy in their pulpits, it was soon found to be far from angelic, and awakened in the most stupid and deluded of Edward's subjects a degree of pity for the sufferings of their wretched sovereign. To counteract the schemes which began to be formed for his deliverance, the Bishop of Hereford, Andrew Orleton, an ancient enemy of Edward's, preached before the queen at Oxford, from the text,^d "My head, my head!" and urged publicly that a bad king, the distempered head of a state, was not to be cured by any chirurgery, and darkly hinted the necessity of severing it from the body.

A.—The Earl of Leicester, now Earl of Lancaster, to whose custody Edward had been committed, treated the royal captive with much humanity and respect;^e this causing alarm to Mortimer, he was removed from Kenilworth, and given over to Lord Berkely, Sir John Maltravers, and Gournay, who were to keep him a month by turns. The king was first carried to Corfe Castle, then to Bristol, and last to Berkely Castle. In

* T. de la Moor. ^b Ibid. ^c Walsingham. ^d T. de la Moor. ^e Ibid.

his journey to the latter place he was treated with every species of indignity by Maltravers and Gournay, who appeared as if they designed to break his heart by ill-treatment: they made him ride in the night-time in sordid and thin clothing, without covering to his head, which in derision they crowned with hay;^a and fearing a rescue, they proposed to disguise him by shaving off his hair and beard: as they came near a ditch they compelled him to alight from his horse, and seating him on a molehill they prepared for that operation with cold and muddy water: the spirits of Edward at length were overcome, he burst into tears, and exclaimed, "See, I have thus provided clean and warm water, whether you will or no."^b His life was afterwards attempted by poison, which the natural strength of his constitution resisted; and his merciless keepers heaped up ordure of every sort beneath his window, in hope that the infection would destroy him.^c

F.—In justice to Lord Berkely it should be noticed, that he does not appear to have been aware of these enormities; indeed he was tried in the next reign, as being privy to the murder, but acquitted, on the plea that, "lying sick at Bradelye without the said castle, he knew not what was done therein, nor was consenting thereto."^d

A.—The ruffians finding the effect of their cruelty too tardy, sent to Mortimer for further instructions: with his answer was said to come the famous letter of the Bishop of Hereford, containing the well-known ambiguous sentence:

Edwardum occidere nolite timere bonum est;^e

which depended on the insertion of a comma whether it carried life or death.

^a T. de la Moor.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

^d Cotton's Abridgment of the Records.

^e T. de la Moor

P.—If the point be inserted after *nobis*, the line means,

To kill Edward be unwilling, to fear is good.

If after *timere*, then the sense runs in somewhat awkward English,

To kill Edward be unwilling to fear, it is good ;

that is, be not afraid to kill Edward.

F.—The shameful equivocation, we may suppose, was sent without being pointed at all, and it was interpreted accordingly by its worst construction.

A.—The termination of Edward's life was attended by circumstances of the most appalling barbarity: in the dead of the night (Sept. 21, 1327), Maltravers and Gournay entered his chamber, and seizing the deposed monarch, threw him on the bed, and held him down with a table: the agonizing shrieks of the miserable sufferer were heard by many, both within and without the castle; they were occasioned by the assassins forcing a red hot iron, which they inserted through a horn, into his bowels; but thus, though no outward marks of violence were discoverable on the body,^a the atrocious transaction remained no secret.

P.— Berkely, whose fair seat hath been famous long,
 Let thy sad echoes shriek a deadly sound ;
 To the vast air complain thy grievous wrong,
 And keep the blood that issued from his wound.^b

So sang the nearly forgotten poet Michael Drayton. It requires not a microscopic eye to discover whence the "Bard" of Gray drew his image on the same subject:

The shrieks of death through Berkely's roofs that ring,
 Shrieks of an agonizing king.

A.—When the murder had transpired, the queen

^a T. de la Moor.

^b Barons' Wars, book 5.

and Mortimer, as might be supposed, disowned their instruments, who were obliged to seek safety in flight.^a A prince less fit to govern a rude and turbulent people than Edward of Caernarvon it is not easy to imagine. In the strength, stature, and beauty of his person he bore a great likeness to his father;^b but beyond externals all resemblance ceased. Though not remarkably deficient in personal courage, Edward had no talents for war; nor was he better qualified for the conduct of political affairs, his loquacity always betraying his secrets. To a narrow genius was added a taste for low and frivolous company, such as dancers, buffoons, minstrels, bargemen, carters, and mechanics; amongst whom he could better indulge his inclination to drink, and be more free in venting his hasty temper. Incapable of distinguishing what was for his advantage, he followed his humour without troubling himself about the consequences; and, like his grandfather Henry the Third, he chose rather to forfeit the affection of his people than deny himself the satisfaction of heaping favours on those he loved.

F.—In an authentic MS. of this king's expenses is the following curious entry: "Paid to James de St. Alban's, the king's painter, who danced before the king upon a table, and made him laugh heartily, a gift, one shilling."^c

P.—Did the strikingly contrasted reigns of the first and second Edward produce any material alteration or improvement in the general aspect of society in England?

A.—Science and literature seem to have made no progress in either reign, if they did not somewhat retrograde. The English tongue continued yet in a rude and unformed state; nor is it at all more intelligible than the

^a T. de la Moor.

^b Knyghton.

^c Antiq. Repertory, vol. 2.

language of the century preceding. Robert of Gloucester, born 1230, has been called by Hearne the English Ennius, and has occasionally been quoted as an historical authority: he wrote a rhyming chronicle, from the arrival of the imaginary Brute to his own time, 1280: its early part is merely a cold prosaic translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, which in its original state possesses much more of a poetic spirit. The following specimen of the obsolete style of Robert of Gloucester, I doubt not, you will esteem quite sufficient:

Walls he lete make al aboute, and yates up and doun
 And after Lud, that was is name, he clupede it Ludstoun;
 The herte yate of the toun, that yut stout there and is,
 He let hit clupie Ludgate, after his own name I wis.
 The toun me clupeth that is wide couth,
 And now me clupeth it London, that is lighter in the mouth.

F.—This is stupid enough; and yet the latter part of the poem becomes less wearisome, and a description of the first crusade is not only entertaining but animated.

A.—A few years later (1338) died another rhyming chronicler, Robert Mannyng, a monk in the monastery of Brunne, in Lincolnshire, and thence more frequently called Robert de Brunne: he was chiefly a translator. His voluminous work, called *Le Brut*, is a translation from the French rhyming chronicle of the kings of England by Maister Wace,* chaplain to Henry the Second. This part of the work has not been printed, but the story having been continued in the French tongue, from the death of Cadwallader to that of Edward the First, by Peter Langtoft, canon of Bridlington, was also translated by Robert de Brunne, and was first published by Thomas Hearne. This poet shows a considerable improvement in versification, as his verses, though printed

* Vol. 1, p. 384.

as Alexandrines, evince a great facility in rhyming, and exhibit a very early specimen of our common ballad metre, which the author happily calls rhyme *entrelacée*:

Richard at Godis board
 His mass had and his rights :
 Hear now swilk a word
 He spake to his knights :

Ne till Acre go,
 Till the castle be taken
 That Philip went fro,
 For us bath it forsaken.

The dikes were full wide
 That closed the castle about,
 And deep on ilka side,
 With bankis high without.

With great double chains
 Drawn over the gate,
 And fifty armed swains
 Porters at that gate.*

F.—Though this is more narrative than poetic, yet the style exceeds in elegance any poem that had yet appeared, and must have been an useful study to succeeding versifiers.

A.—In the composition of Latin the same barbarous style continued which drew down the censures of Archbishop Kilwarby half a century before; and in Latin poetry no specimen is to be found at all comparable to the writers of the era of Henry the Second: one of the best pieces, consisting of a lament in one hundred and twelve verses, has been attributed to the unfortunate Edward, during his confinement at Kenilworth; but as the taste of this prince was decidedly low, it is much more probable that the poem was the production of William of Wyrcester two centuries later, in whose annals it originally appeared: could it be allowed as

* Ellis, *Specimens of early English Poetry*, vol. 1.

genuine, though it did not prove the king a poet, it would yet evince a decent degree of scholarship :

Dampnum mihi contulit tempore brumali,
Fortuna satis aspera, vehementis mali,
Nullus est tam sapiens, mitis aut formosus,
Tam prudens virtutibus, ceterisque famosus :
Quin stultus reputabitur, et satis despectus
Si fortuna prosperos, avertat effectus.

On my devoted head stern fortune pours,
As from a wintry cloud, her fiercest showers :
No man, however virtuous or renown'd,
By prudence guarded, and by wisdom crown'd,
If fortune but avert her treacherous face,
But shall be reckon'd fool, and meet disgrace.

F.—Though little improvement in learning could be expected in an age in which the very few students of the Greek, Hebrew, and Oriental tongues were suspected of magic, yet there arose, principally in the university of Oxford, a host of writers usually termed the schoolmen, the authors, or rather revivers, of a subtle, wrangling, verbose, unintelligible species of logic and metaphysics, which they chiefly applied to the study of theology. No sect of philosophers, pretended or real, ever acquired more reputation in their day, or more excited vulgar astonishment ; the chief professors obtained the appellation of the irrefragable, the subtle, the profound, the seraphic, the resolute, or the invincible doctor ; the individuals to which these titles were applied it is scarcely worth while to distinguish, as they and their works have long since gone, *Numa quo devenit et Ancus*.

A.—Yet many of these schoolmen were men of great genius and invention, possessing much subtlety and acuteness of intellect, but they wanted true taste and a right direction in their studies. They wasted their faculties and time in maintaining such sort of doctrine as

that two contradictory propositions might both be true, and that in a man there is only one form. In theology their enquiries were audacious and profane,* as, Where was the Deity before the creation appeared? When were the angels made, and how? Doth the glorified body of Christ in heaven use a sitting or a standing posture? Were the clothes in which he appeared after his resurrection real or imaginary? Is the body of Christ in the eucharist dressed or undressed? Is the eucharist digested in the human stomach? Whether it be a possible proposition for the father to hate the son? Whether it be a lighter crime to kill a thousand men than darn a stocking on the sabbath?^b From such questions we may conclude that the schoolmen sought to explain, as expressed by Fuller,^c things mystical that might not, things difficult that could not, and things curious that need not, be known.

F.—We must exempt from this censure the great name of Roger Bacon, who though he was called the wonderful doctor, yet his enquiries were of a very different nature, and for which, like so many other distinguished persons whose understanding has forerun the general knowledge and spirit of the age in which they lived, he became the object of almost incessant persecution, and passed many years of his life in prison; he attained however the age of seventy-eight, and died 1292. Roger Bacon was born at Ilchester; it is uncertain whether he studied at Merton College, or at the old hall of Brazen Nose, in Oxford, but he became a Franciscan monk. He appears as wonderful to us as he did to his contemporaries; his genius was universal; he not only cultivated but improved the various sciences of grammar, metaphysics, physics, optics, geo-

* Erasmus, *Encom. Morie.*

^b *Ibid.*

^c Church Hist. of Brit.

graphy, astronomy, chronology, chemistry, ethics, and philology. The following list of his discoveries must appear truly astonishing: the exact length of the solar year, and a method of correcting the calendar, the microscope, the telescope, and various mathematical instruments; the method of performing several chemical operations now in use; the nature of the mechanical powers, and the best method of applying and combining them: these inventions indeed lay concealed, and succeeding ages have claimed the merit of the discovery.

P.—In what form are these discoveries of Roger Bacon accessible?

A.—The author collected a considerable number of his treatises, and presented them to Pope Clement the Fourth, under the title of *Opus Majus*: this work was published in 1733, by Dr. Samuel Jebb, and is a curious repository of the opinions of the age, as well as a monument of the indefatigable researches of Friar Bacon.

F.—It does not contain however the most remarkable of his discoveries, the composition of gunpowder: that its powers were known to this great philosopher is abundantly evident: he states in another work,* that from saltpetre and other ingredients he was able to make a fire that would burn at any distance he pleased, with sounds like thunder, and corruscations in the air more horrible than those which naturally happen, and by which a city or an army might be destroyed; but apprehensive of the mischief that might follow, he concealed the name of one of his ingredients by an anagram, thus securing to his own fame the anticipation of that discovery which he judged would be made by a future age: his recipe is doubtless a curiosity—*Sed*

* R. Baconi, *Epistola de Secretis Operibus Artis et Naturæ*.

tamen, salis petræ "luru mope can ubre" (carbonum pulvere) et sulphure, et sic facies tonitrum et corruscationem—With saltpetre, powdered charcoal, and sulphur, you may make thunder and lightning.

P.—No wonder that by such experiments he acquired the character of a magician: and pray what is the foundation of the story of his brazen head?

A.—Friar Bacon was not the first person to whom the formation of such an automaton has been attributed. The celebrated ecclesiastic Gerbert, afterwards Pope Silvester the Second,^a in the tenth century, was said to possess a brazen head, but it would only speak when spoken to, as Partridge says of a ghost, and its answers were confined to yes and no: when asked by its master if ever he should become Pope, it answered Yes; and when he further enquired, whether he should die before he sang at Jerusalem, it answered No; which however proved false, for Silvester departed this life at Rome, without having visited the Holy Land.

P.—The faculty of answering only by these two monosyllables would have admirably qualified this head for a different station.

A.—After this story had got into the world, there was no person distinguished by mechanical science but was said to have made such a brazen head; hence Robert Grosstête,^b bishop of Lincoln, was reputed to possess one, which being broken by some accident, the relics were kept by him in a vault at Oxford, and were, after his death, bestowed by vulgar report upon Roger Bacon, in conjunction with a certain brother of the Franciscan order, Friar Bungay. The project which engaged these two learned monks was the possibility of enclosing England with a wall of brass; but as they

^a Will. Malmesb. lib. 2, c. 10.

^b Ant. & Wood, Hist. & Antiq. Oxon.

had a great deal of business on their hands, it seems they forgot, or were absent at, the critical moment when the head gave its oracular advice, and consequently the whole contrivance vanished.

P.—Of what antiquity is this celebrated legend?

A.—The earliest notice of it with which I am acquainted, is a drama called “The honorable Historie of Friar Bacon and Friar Bongay,” by Robert Greene, 1594, though it is unquestionably much more ancient: in this play Bacon is represented as a powerful magician, and he thus addresses his servant Miles, a poor scholar of Oxford:

Now, Miles, in thee rests Friar Bacon's weal;
The honour and renown of all his life
Hangs in the watching of this brazen head;
Therefore I charge thee, by the immortal God,
This night thou watch, for ere the morning star,
The head will speak; then, Miles, upon thy life,
Wake me, for then by magic art I'll work
To end my seven years' task with excellence.
If that a wink but shut thy watchful eye,
Then farewell Bacon's glory and his fame.

At the end of this speech the worthy friar falls fast asleep, which circumstance his serving-man thus explains:

“I thought you would talk yourself to sleep anon, and 'tis no marvel, for Bungay on the days and he on the nights have watched just these ten and fifty days; now this is the night, and 'tis my task, and no more.” Soon after a great noise is heard, and the head utters, “Time is.” Miles, who is drawn as a ridiculous buffoon, then expresses his wonder, but waits for something more explicit before he wakes his master. The head now exclaiming “Time was,” the serving-man still thinking that two monosyllables only could be no matter of importance, continues his idle prate; when

the head for the last time speaks the fatal conclusion, "Time is past," thunder and lightning then arise, and a hand appears that breaks down the head with a hammer. Bacon awakening, and being informed of the particulars, bitterly exclaims :

'Tis past indeed !
 My life, my fame, my glory, all are past !
 Villain, if thou hadst called to Bacon then,
 If thou hadst watched, and waked the sleepy friar,
 The brazen head had uttered aphorisms,
 And England had been circled round with brass.

F.—I suppose it is impossible to ascertain the original inventor of the story ; but its merit is sufficiently attested by its universal reception with all ranks, ages, and conditions.

A.—After all, perhaps, the legend is nothing more than an allegory of the alchymists : the brazen head meaning the vessel in which the great philosophical work was wrought, but the critical moment of projection, which should have transmuted the baser metal into gold, being neglected, an opportunity was lost of making the strongest defence for England which the unlimited possession of wealth could have procured. Roger Bacon was doubtless led away by the strange infatuation of the philosopher's stone and the potable elixir, which prevailed for so many centuries ; but in all other respects his philosophy was founded on good sense : he deplored the ignorance and prejudice of the age, and so far from even pretending to magic, he constantly lamented the attributing to its power every thing that was great and excellent in science, as it not only hindered the propagation, but the fame of genuine knowledge.

F.—A very different kind of philosophy from the knowledge of cause and effect in natural objects was

the practice of physic in these times, if we may judge from a work called "*Praxis Medica Rosa Anglica*,"—the Medical Rose, by John Gaddesden, a physician; in which is to be found this excellent recipe for the small-pox: "Cause the whole body of your patient to be wrapped in scarlet cloth, and command every thing about the bed to be made red: this is an excellent cure." "It was in this manner (says the doctor) that I treated the son of the noble King of England, afterwards Edward the Third, when he had the small-pox, without leaving any marks behind." * Yet, notwithstanding this gross absurdity, Gaddesden was evidently a man of great research; he gives a recipe for rendering salt water fresh by distillation, a discovery supposed generally to be of more modern date.

A.—The historians of this period sadly degenerated from the pure style of William of Malmesbury and the lively delineations of Matthew Paris: they are both few in number and distinguished by few excellencies. Thomas Wykes, canon of the order of St. Augustine, in the abbey of Osney, near Oxford, composed a history or chronicle of England, from the Conquest to the year 1304; it is but little esteemed. Of something better value are the *Annals*, from 1130 to 1307, of Nicholas Trivet, prior of a monastery of Dominican friars in London, where he was buried, 1328. Another writer was Matthew of Westminster, a Benedictine monk, whose *Flores Historiarum* reach from the beginning of the world to the year 1307; but the work was afterwards continued by Adam Murimuth and others: this author was chiefly a collector of the flowers of former historians, from which he is called *Florilegus*; and consequently, though his work contains many curious

* Page 1050.

particulars, there is little that is original: he is esteemed as an acute, faithful, and judicious compiler. It is remarkable, that frequently our elder writers in the early part of their histories are merely transcribers from their predecessors, and that often word for word.

F.—Though in the latter part of their labours these historians relate the occurrences of their own times, and so far are contemporary authorities, yet our knowledge of many events is derived from subsequent authors, who collected their materials from public documents, afterwards available.

A.—Such must necessarily be the case with most historical testimonies. About this time lived John Brompton, abbot of Joreval, in Yorkshire; his history begins with the coming of Augustine, and ends with the reign of Richard the First; but whether the abbot was the author, or merely the donor of this work to his monastery, is uncertain. Whoever was the writer, he was wonderfully credulous, but not the less entertaining; and he frequently makes his readers smile at the wild tales, which he relates with apparent simplicity as solemn truths; his information respecting the times of the Saxons, together with his insertion of a collection of the Saxon laws, renders his work valuable. The reign of Edward the Second was written soon after his death by an anonymous monk of Malmesbury, and also by two other monks, John de Trokelowe and Henry de Blaneford, but we know not even to what monastery they belonged. All these works contain some particulars not found elsewhere; but a more valuable performance is the life of the same monarch by Sir Thomas de la Moor, who was one of the council: it is both candid and accurate; it was originally written in French, but is more frequently met with in the Latin translation

of Walter Baker, canon of Osney. This work may be considered as curious, being the first contribution to English history from the pen of a layman. Sir Thomas gives evident marks of a sincere and faithful attachment to his unhappy master.

F.—The early French historians throw little light upon the affairs of England; but they inform us of a transaction which took place in France, which sufficiently proves that cruelty and injustice were not confined to one country. The wealth of the order of the Templars having excited the cupidity of Philip the Fair, that monarch, on the evidence of two knights who had been condemned to perpetual imprisonment for their crimes, charged the whole order with such absurd and enormous offences, as are sufficient in themselves to destroy all the credit of the accusation: besides the guilt of murder, robbery, and all sorts of licentiousness, it was pretended that every one whom the Templars received into their order was initiated by infamous rites,^a and obliged to renounce his Saviour, to spit upon the cross, and to join to this impiety the worshipping of a gilded head. On this charge a great number of the unfortunate fraternity, together with their grand-master, John 'de Molay, perished in the flames.^b

A.—The Templars, at their first institution (1118), consisted of only nine knights, who had their residence in a house near the Temple, at Jerusalem, and they were engaged in the protection of the pilgrims who visited the Holy Sepulchre;^c by degrees the order obtained vast possessions throughout Europe; their riches relaxed the original severity of their virtue, and being men of family, they passed their time in the

^a Walsingham.

^b Vertot.

^c Will. Tyre, lib. 12.

dissipation usual in their station: to drink like a Templar,^a became even a common proverb. That many of its members were dissolute in their conduct, is sufficiently probable; but that an order instituted for the purpose of fighting against the enemies of Christianity, should make the renouncing of Christ, with every mark of contempt, their seal of initiation, is altogether incredible. The event no further belongs to English history, than that the order being dissolved by the Pope, its possessions here were transferred to the knights of the order of St. John of Jerusalem.^b

^a Collier, *Eccles. Hist.*

^b Rymer, vol. 3.

DISSERTATION IX.

Windsor Castle.

THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET,

CONTINUED.

EDWARD III. - - A.D. 1327.

RICHARD II. - - - 1377.

SECTION I.

F.—THIS beautiful county of Berks, the birth-place of our immortal Alfred, alway inspires a feeling peculiarly English; the “silver winding way” of Father Thames, combining in the landscape with the lofty towers of Windsor,

At once the monarch and the Muses’ seat,

rising above the luxuriant foliage of the forest, reminds us that we are treading the most classical ground in the kingdom.

A.—The site of Windsor Castle has been occupied by a fortress from a very early period. William the Conqueror, delighted with the abundance of wood in its neighbourhood, and, its conveniency for hunting, either built a new castle or repaired the old: the sub-

* Ashmole, Order of the Garter.

sequent kings of England continued their attachment; and here was Edward the Third born. To the partiality of this monarch for the place of his nativity, Windsor owes its present magnificence; he rebuilt the noble structure before us; in its general plan the idea of a Norman castle, as described in our fifth conversation,^a is greatly superseded by that of a royal dwelling; the palace encroaches on the fortress; a connected series of buildings completely surrounds and partly occupies two large courts, scarcely less than a mile in circumference; but the part which may be properly called the castle is the round tower or keep connecting the two courts: this building is supposed to be constructed on the base, and after the model, of the Conqueror's Norman fabric; it presents nothing very remarkable in an architectural view, but is indeed memorable as being the prison in which two captive monarchs, the kings of France and Scotland, confined at the same period, might condole each other on their common calamity.

P.—From the great variety of style observable in this extensive pile, we conclude that successive additions were made to Edward's original design.

A.—There is scarcely a subsequent monarch to whom Windsor owes not some obligation: to trace minutely each particular would be as difficult as tedious. St George's chapel was commenced by Edward the Fourth, and the magnificent terrace, the noblest walk in Europe, is a monument of the taste of Queen Elizabeth.^b

F.—To no king of England has Windsor Castle been more indebted than to his present majesty, George the Fourth, whose extensive additions, erected in the

^a Vol. 1, p. 173.

^b Camden.

) justest taste, are crowned by this triumphant entrance, opposite the great avenue of the park, producing the enchantment excited in dreams by the perusal of a tale of chivalry, but which the waking judgment could scarcely hope to see realized.

P.—In the *tout-ensemble* of Windsor Castle, we undoubtedly perceive the gradual transition from the ancient stronghold, formidable and inconvenient, to the elegance and comfort of a modern residence.

A.—The old Norman castle was admirably well suited for defence, but was a most uncomfortable and doleful dwelling. When long possession had secured the domains of the great barons, they gradually adopted a more convenient style of architecture. In the plan of Windsor Castle defence was not altogether overlooked, as the edifice, seated on a rising ground, with its continuity of walls and gates, could still resist any desultory attack, though it could not have sustained a siege like the strong fortresses of the Conqueror.

F.—Those who take an interest in the transmutation of the castle to the palace, may see two very early examples of the first departure from the ancient style in the castles of Conway and Caernarvon, built by Edward the First. The keep, no longer being the residence of the family, the towers abutting on the outward walls assumed a more lofty appearance, and contained apartments in which the inmates could enjoy the benefit of a pure air and unconfined prospect, whilst a greater space within the walls admitted the erection of a stately hall and other additions unknown in such ancient fortresses as the castles of Colchester or Rochester.

A.—A further departure from the old rule was strikingly exemplified in Windsor Castle, as not only the towers, but the wall itself, forming the boundary to

the upper ward on the south and east parts before the late alterations, contained very numerous apartments, some of them not incommodious; at least we may suppose such to be the case with those in the building called the Devil's Tower, which have been occupied by maids of honour.*

F.—The architect of Windsor Castle, William of Wykeham, a poor parish priest, afterwards bishop of Winchester, desirous of having his name connected with so magnificent a fabric, caused to be written on one of the windows, "This work made Wykeham;" a quibbling phrase, not translateable into Latin; which displeasing the king, he explained away the ostentatious assumption by saying, that his meaning was, that the work had been the cause of the architect's advancement.^b When afterwards he applied for the rich see of Winchester, Edward objected, on account of his want of learning; but, said Wykeham in reply, "Though unlearned myself, in recompense I will make many learned men;" which he indeed performed, in the noble foundations of Winchester School, and of New College, Oxford.

P.— Should it be asked, Why did this prelate so?
Answer, He lived five hundred years ago.

A.—Singular was the mode of conducting the erection of Windsor Castle; instead of engaging workmen by contracts and wages, a certain number of artificers was pressed from various counties to complete the work, under very severe penalties.^c This palace has ever been the favourite residence of most of the succeeding kings of England, but none of them surpassed its founder in the stately magnificence of display and

* Pote, Windsor Castle. ^b Camden, Remains. ^c Ashmole. Rymer, vol. 5.

hospitality. Those who delight in the glories of chivalry,

Le donne, i cavalier, l'arme, gli amori
Le cortesie, l'audaci impresi ———,

can scarcely figure in their imagination a more striking picture than the grand tournament held here in the year 1344. Edward had it proclaimed throughout Europe, that he designed to revive the round table of King Arthur,* offering free conduct and courteous reception to all who might be disposed to attend the ceremony, adding, that he should be present, with the chief of his nobility, and accompanied by three hundred of the fairest ladies in the land.

P.—Such a spectacle naturally leads to an enquiry concerning the origin of chivalry and its influence on society.

F.—The derivation of the word chivalry is obviously from *cheval*, and originally meant a body of soldiers serving on horseback: to explain its application to an order, or institution, whose members were distinguished by the peculiar duties of religion, of romantic valour, and of ardent devotion to the female sex, is a task of somewhat greater difficulty.

A.—Nor is an estimation of the effects which it has produced on society less embarrassing: the generality of authors who have treated on the subject represent chivalry as having conferred upon the middle ages a benefit second only to the dispensation of the gospel; but it must be confessed that, when we look at its practical results, we are startled at such a conclusion.

P.—But the principles of love, valour, and devotion, must surely be in themselves meritorious.

A.—Doubtless, when under the control of reason;

* Walsingham.

but this faculty of the soul chivalry seemed utterly to disclaim; the profession in theory of pure affection often degenerated in practice to gross licentiousness; valour was exerted in hairbrain exploits, occasioning needless quarrels, and religion became a headlong, blind, and intolerant zeal for established opinions, restraining all manly freedom of thought or enquiry; as even to express a doubt of the superstition of the age, became a crime only to be expiated by the blood of the offender.

F.—How little the profession of purity of affection influenced the conduct of some warriors may be inferred from a story of Arundel, the commander of an English expedition in the year 1380, who, as his ships, with soldiers on board destined for the aid of Brittany, lay wind-bound near Portsmouth,^a waited on the abbess of a convent in the neighbourhood, and desired that his officers should be permitted to visit the nuns, who were ladies of good family: her denial was in vain, and in consequence all the nuns were seduced or violated, and the officers carried them on board their vessels: a dreadful storm arising, the fleet was nearly lost off the Irish coast, when these gallant cavaliers threw the unfortunate damsels into the sea, “either,” says the old chronicler,^b “that they would not be troubled with their lamentable noise and crying, or perhaps they thought that so long as they had such women on board, God would not cease the rage of the tempest.”

P.—Pious logic, indeed!

A.—Nor was the refinement of female manners the result of chivalry; it not unfrequently happened that the mistress to whom the knight devoted his service was a married lady, which led to the most scandalous

^a Walsingham.

^b Holinshed.

dissolution of morals; and of all the works of literature there is no class of writings more gross and licentious than the romances of chivalry, with which the high-born dames of the middle ages were wont to be entertained, but which no person of either sex can read at present without a blush. That the valour of the knight was often unprofitably exerted, we may judge from the celebrated rencontre of thirty combatants against thirty, in Brittany: during a truce in the contentions of that country, Bembro, an Englishman, entered the lists, with twenty English, six Bretons, and four Germans, on the party of the Count of Montfort, and was opposed by thirty Bretons on the part of the Count of Blois, led by Beaumanoir, who, entering the field, called out it would be seen that day who had the fairest mistresses.* After a bloody fray, which was fought on foot, five of the English being killed, the Bretons prevailed. These deeds of arms served no useful purpose, and did not remedy, if they did not tend rather to increase, the want of discipline so generally observable in that age.

F.—A lively Frenchman observes, that if the Scipios had combatted the enemies of Rome to know which had the fairest mistresses, the Romans would never have become the conquerors and legislators of nations.

A.—The fanaticism which chivalry inspired was a positive evil: the suffering Albigenses were equally its victims as the Mahometan adversaries of the Cross: the conquerors of America in the sixteenth century, deeply imbued with a chivalrous spirit, considering themselves, as a military body, entitled to teach religion at the point of the sword, enforced their doctrines with that sort of success which humanity shudders to contemplate.

* Argentée, *Hist. de Bretagne*, lib. 5.

P.—Is there any original code, or body of laws, which may be considered as principles of the order?

A.—No such code was ever formally promulgated, or admitted in any system of jurisprudence; its chief injunctions must be therefore sought in the early romances and books of knight errantry. Don Quixote affords more real knowledge of the subject than all other works put together. That feeling of respect and deference to the female sex which forms the most valuable part of chivalry, may be traced to the Germans in their primitive state, since we are told by Tacitus, that in the female character they considered there was something of a sacred and provident nature;* and the ceremonies of the knight's initiation were but a more formal and pompous introduction of the young warrior to the privileges of a soldier, as originally practised in the woods of Germany; nay even the point of honour itself is distinctly discoverable in the philosophic historian's description of the customs of the same people.

F.—Thus the embryo spark of chivalry existed in ancient Germany; it began to dawn under Charlemagne; it blazed forth in the crusades; but its brightest period was during the wars between England and France in the fourteenth century.

A.—Chivalry flourished earlier on the continent than in England; the nobles there associated, during the universal licence of the eighth and ninth centuries, to protect the female sex, who were often the spoil and victims of outrageous assault: so far chivalry was perfectly consistent with good sense, and became of public utility; in this period, Charlemagne solemnly invested his son Louis with the sword and other equipage of a warrior; but it was not till the eleventh

* De Morib. Germ.

century that the dignity of a knight was conferred by a species of investiture, accompanied by the religious ceremonies of fasting, watching, and a solemn oath, by which the aspirant professed himself the champion of God and of the ladies, and devoted himself to speak the truth, to maintain the right, to protect the distressed, to practise courtesy, and to pursue the infidels.^a

F.—A strange mixture of honour, fanaticism, and impiety, from which I suspect a specious varnish of politeness was the chief benefit.

A.—Chivalry seems to be a sort of poetical abstract of the feudal system, which, though imposing at a certain distance, admits not a very near approach; the real improvements of society did not take place till after the decline of the institution, when the establishment of free cities gave security to commerce, and bestowed wealth and importance on an order of men, for whom the maxims of chivalry inculcated the most profound contempt.

P.—Yet the tournament, exhibiting a lively image of the business of the field, and attended as it was by the great and the fair, must have been an animating and noble spectacle.

A.—That it was better calculated to please the eye than to amend the heart, hear the opinion of La Nouë,^b a French writer in 1587, himself a brave warrior, who lost his life in battle: "The maxims of chivalry," says he, "by rendering habitual the sight of blood, have made the court of France pitiless and cruel; from them the age has derived the recommendation and practice of incontinence, the poison of revenge, the neglect of sober and rational duty, the confusion

^a St. Palaye, *Memoires sur la Chevalerie*.

^b *Discours Politiques et Militaires*, p. 172.

of public order, and a desperate blood-thirstiness, under the disguise of a search after honour."

F.—A severe conclusion; but the splendid achievements

Of our great Edward and his greater son,

seem to have thrown a glare upon chivalry which has dazzled the sober judgment of the beholder: to these illustrious knights no one can deny the praise of valour and courtesy, but an attentive examination will discover that even their enterprises, though crowned with the most brilliant success, partake thus far of the chivalric character, that being founded on imaginary or unjust pretensions, they were attended with infinite suffering; and led to no useful result.

A.—Edward gave early proof of being animated with an active and military, if not a chivalrous spirit. Immediately after the barbarous murder of his father, Edward the Second, a regency was appointed, in which, though Mortimer, now created Earl of Marche, had no place, he so contrived affairs as to usurp the entire authority of the kingdom; he settled on the queen the greater part of the royal revenue,* and by his arrogance and power soon excited all the envy which formerly attended Gaveston or Spenser. In this feverish state of public feeling the King of Scots, Robert Bruce, though declining in years and health, judged it a favourable opportunity to attack England; and his soldiers breaking into the northern counties, a large army was appointed by the regency to oppose them, headed by the young monarch, now burning to distinguish himself.

F.—The chief interest in this dispute is the picture of manners, given by Froissart, of the Scottish army:

* Knyghton.

its light armed troops, mounted on small horses, found every where an easy subsistence, their whole equipage being a bag of meal, which each soldier carried behind him, with a light plate, on which he baked it into a thin cake in the open fields; his cookery too was equally expeditious, as these northern Tartars, after flaying an ox, made an extemporaneous cauldron with his skin, by hanging it upon stakes in the form of a bag, into which they poured water, and kindling a fire below, thus boiled their victuals.

A.—It was with difficulty that the English could reach so rapid and desultory a body; for though Edward offered a reward of a hundred pounds a year to any one who should bring him an account of their proceedings,^a he remained inactive several days. At length the Scots were discovered, under the command of Randolph, earl of Moray, and Sir James Douglas, posted with so great judgment on the banks of the Were, that it was esteemed dangerous to hazard an attack, which Edward would have attempted at any risk, had he not been prevented by Mortimer. During this delay an incident occurred, which well nigh put an end to all the young monarch's designs: Douglas having got the word, broke secretly by night into his adversary's camp, with a body of two hundred determined soldiers, and galloping up, cut the cords of the king's tent. The English were alarmed by the shouts of "A Douglas! a Douglas! die, ye English thieves!"^b and so imminent was the danger, that the royal chaplain and chamberlain were killed, and the king, after making a valiant defence, escaped in the dark. Douglas with difficulty secured his retreat, having slain no less than three hundred men, but with the loss of several

^a Rymer, vol. 4.

^b Froissart.

of his followers. Soon after the Scottish army broke up by night, and Edward, on entering the deserted encampment, found only six Englishmen, whom the enemy, after breaking their legs, had tied to trees, in order to prevent their giving intelligence.*

F.—The Scottish army, under its able leaders, appears to have highly advanced in discipline. From the account of Barbour, it would seem that the English used gunpowder in this expedition, though with little effect; he thus describes its operation:

The other crakys were of war
That they before heard never air.

A.—Mortimer becoming sensible of the public hatred, thought it requisite to procure peace abroad, and entering into a negotiation with Robert Bruce for that purpose (1328,) he stipulated a marriage between Jane, the sister of Edward, and David, the son of the Scottish king. The Scots, by way of triumph, gave the young princess the sobriquet of Joan Makepeace, as if the realm of England had made the match out of fear and incompetency to continue the war. Mortimer also, to the great discontent of the English nation, resigned all claim of feudal superiority over Scotland;^b he agreed to restore the national jewels, amongst which was the sacred black cross of Scotland; to send back the coronation stone;^c and to render up all the ancient muniments, particularly the deed, called, I know not wherefore, Ragman's roll,^d which contained the acknowledgment of homage and fealty made by John Baliol, the nobles, clergy, and all orders of men, to Edward the First. In return for these concessions, England was to receive thirty thousand marks,^e the larger part of which sum Mortimer is said to have appropriated to his own use.

* Froissart. ^b Rymer, vol. 4. ^c See page 25. ^d Grafton. ^e Hemingf.

F.—Thus in one year Mortimer committed greater political delinquencies than Edward the Second and his favourites were guilty of during a whole reign.

A.—In order to intimidate his opponents, this unprincipled and aspiring man determined to sacrifice to his ambition the Earl of Kent, brother to the deceased king, a weak and simple prince, who had been persuaded by Mortimer's emissaries that Edward was yet alive, though closely detained a prisoner in Corfe Castle. Sir James Deverel, the governor, basely entering into the conspiracy, pretended to shew the earl his royal brother, sitting at a table in a darkened apartment, with whom, though he dared not permit the earl to speak, yet he promised to deliver a letter. The unwary Kent, thus encouraged, wrote an epistle, in which he promised to use all his power to set the imprisoned king at liberty. This was immediately taken to Mortimer, who accused the unfortunate prince, on this ridiculous charge, of treason, and he was condemned by the slavish peers to lose his life and fortune. But though nobles had condemned, the royal prisoner stood five hours at the place of execution, before a person could be found willing to perform the last office, and he was a felon from the Marshalsea, under promise of pardon for his offences. The Earl of Kent died extremely pitied by the people, in the twenty-eighth year of his age.*

F.—It is difficult to acquit the young king altogether from blame in this disgraceful transaction; as whether he knew not of his uncle's execution, or had not power to prevent it, is uncertain.

A.—From a youth of Edward's spirit, it was not likely that he would long consent to remain under the tutelage of Mortimer, with whose conduct, as it regarded

* Hemingf. Ypod. Neust.

the Scottish war, he was highly incensed; but he was so surrounded by the emissaries of that nobleman, that it became necessary to conduct his plan of emancipation with secrecy and caution. The queen and Mortimer, with a large retinue of knights, were lodged in Nottingham Castle; the king also, with a few attendants, was admitted; but as the keys were carried every evening to the queen, a band of armed associates was secretly introduced, by the connivance of Sir William Eland, the governor, through a subterraneous passage, the entrance to which was covered with rubbish. Two knights of Mortimer's train were killed in resisting the unexpected attack, and the earl himself was suddenly seized, and placed in security.^a

P.—The old poet's beautiful description of the circumstance is not then precisely correct:

The night wax'd old, not dreaming of these things,
And to her chamber is the queen withdrawn,
To whom a choice musician plays and sings,
Whilst she sat under an estate of lawn,
In night attire, more god-like glittering
Than any eye had seen the cheerful dawn,
Leaning upon her most lov'd Mortimer,
Whose voice more than the music pleas'd her ear.

She laid her fingers on his manly cheek,
The gods' pure sceptres and the darts of love,
That with their touch might make a tiger meek,
Or might great Atlas from his seat remove:
So white, so soft, so delicate, so sleek,
As she had worn a lily for her glove,
As might beget life where was never none,
And put a spirit into the hardest stone.^b

A.—Mortimer was seized in an apartment adjoining that of the queen's chamber, who, hearing an alarm, her fears did not permit her to remain in bed, and she burst into the room, crying out, "Sweet son, fair son,

^a Avesbury.

^b Drayton, *Barons' Wars*, book 6.

spare my gentle Mortimer;" declaring that he was a worthy knight, her dearest friend, and well-beloved cousin.

F.—The exact words of her first exclamation were, "Beau fitz, beau fitz, ayez pitie du gentile Mortimer."^a

A.—But they were of no avail; the gentle Mortimer was immediately summoned before a parliament, who condemned him upon the supposed notoriety of the facts alleged against him, without hearing witnesses or defence; and he was executed at the Elms, in the neighbourhood of London (1330,) with every circumstance of degradation.^b

P.—A fate which, it must be allowed, his deeds amply merited.

A.—Mortimer was insatiably covetous and insufferably vain; he was so ostentatious of his immense wealth, that even one of his own sons denominated him King of Folly.^c His attainder was afterward reversed in parliament, and his male posterity, by a marriage with the royal family, became heirs of the English throne, which they transmitted to the line of York. The distracted Queen Isabella was sent to the castle of Risings in Surrey, where she passed, with a diminished income, in a sort of qualified confinement, twenty-five years, in sorrow rather than in penitence. The king paid her occasional visits, from decency, but never permitted her to assume the least authority in public affairs.^d

F.—The situation and character of Mortimer and Isabella were with the last generation much scrutinized, from their invidious application, by a popular writer of great influence in his day, Junius, to the persons of the

^a Stow, Annals.

^c Leland, Col. vol. 2.

^b Walsingham Froissart.

^d Froissart.

then Princess Dowager of Wales and the Earl of Bute.

A.—The young king, as soon as he took the administration of affairs into his own hands, seemed to follow the example of his grandfather, Edward the First, by reforming various abuses, and securing the safety and good order of the kingdom;* and, like him, turned a desiring eye towards Scotland, now, by the death of its wise and valiant monarch, Robert Bruce (1329,) less prepared to resist any aggression from its ambitious neighbour.

F.—Robert Bruce left his son David, a minor, to the guardianship of the Earl of Moray; and when dying, entreated his old companion in arms, Sir James Douglas, to bear his heart to the Holy Land. The valiant knight, with a splendid train, set out for that purpose; but hearing that the Moors were invading Arragon, he joined in battle against them, and was slain. In the heat of the fight he darted the casket, which contained the heart of his heroic friend, among the Moors, saying, "Go forward, as thou wert wont, Douglas will follow thee or die!"^b The heart of Bruce being rescued, was brought back to Scotland, and buried at Melross.

P.—This seems to be the true spirit of knight errantry; instead of sensibly attending to his business, Douglas gets knocked on the head in a quarrel with which he had no concern. It is this royal heart of Bruce which has ever since made a conspicuous figure in the coat of arms of the noble race of Douglas.

A.—Scotland, deprived of its great defender, soon fell into a similar state of anarchy as existed before his accession. The claims of some English barons to

* Cotton's Abridgment.

^b Froissart.

the possession of their former estates in that kingdom being disregarded by the regent, Moray, they invited over from France Edward Baliol, the son of that John who had been crowned king of Scotland; for the double purpose of asserting his claim to the throne, and under his auspices of recovering their lands. Though Edward was ashamed openly to avow his approbation of this ungenerous attempt against a brother-in-law, yet he secretly assisted the enterprize, in which the English barons succeeded so far as to overrun the kingdom, and to crown Baliol at Scone. The young David Bruce and his wife, the sister of Edward, taking refuge in France, Baliol, in order to secure his new possession, offered to renew the feudal homage to Edward for his kingdom, being sensible that his continuance on the throne depended entirely on English protection. This offer was accepted by Edward; but before it could be publicly acted on, Baliol, by an unexpected attack, lost his crown more suddenly than he acquired it, and was chased into England. Edward now avowedly stood forward as his protector, and prepared with a mighty army to replace him on the Scottish throne. Arriving at Berwick, he defeated the Scots in a great battle (1293,) at Halidown Hill, a little to the north of that town, with immense slaughter;* restored Baliol, his new ally; overran the kingdom, and subdued every thing but the hearts of its inhabitants.

F.—The relative situation of the two countries was precisely the same as in the time of Edward the First: a nominal dominion of Baliol, supported by the English, confined nearly to the spot which their army occupied; and a deadly hostility of the natives, ready to break out with the first opportunity.

* Hemingf. Knyghton.

A.—In this crisis of affairs, Philip de Valois, king of France, jealous of the growing power of Edward, and moved by the representation of David Bruce, now in his court, resolved to protect that illustrious exile, and encourage the Scots in their struggle for independence. Edward, alarmed at this interference, became determined to prevent its efficacy, by starting an unexpected claim to the crown of France itself, in right of Isabella, his mother.

F.—As this transaction involves the history of the two kingdoms for a whole century afterwards, it is necessary to unravel the genealogy of the French royal family, in order that we may perfectly understand the basis of Edward's pretensions. Philip the Fourth, surnamed the Fair, dying (1314,) left three sons, Lewis Hutin, Philip the Long, and Charles the Fair, together with a daughter, Isabella, married to our Edward the Second. What is very remarkable, though in no manner connected with the disputed claim, these three princes at the same time accused their wives of adultery, in full parliament, at Paris: the ladies were imprisoned, and two of them, the wives of Lewis and Charles, being found guilty, were subsequently divorced, and their gallants flayed alive: no proof appearing against the wife of Philip, he received her again into favour.*

P.—If such were the times of chivalry, let us not complain of our own.

F.—The three brothers, in succession, mounted the French throne. The elder, Lewis Hutin, was so named, says the President Henault, from the small hammer of a cooper, which clatters much, but does little work, though Mezerai asserts it to be an old French word, signifying a quarreller. Dying in 1316, Lewis Hewtin left a daughter by his first wife; and his queen being pregnant,

* Mezerai.

was delivered of a son, who lived only eight days: a dispute now arose, the first of the kind which had been agitated in France for many ages, whether the daughter, or the brother of the deceased king ought to succeed to the vacant diadem. The states of the kingdom being assembled, declared by a solemn and deliberate decree, the wisdom of which is commonly admitted, that all females were for ever incapable of inheriting the crown of France.*

A.—But though this determination took place on the supposed famous maxim of the Salique law, it is very difficult to prove that such a maxim ever had an actual existence; all that can be found in its support is a regulation concerning private fiefs, which required a personal military service, which of course females could not perform. The code of the Salians, an ancient tribe amongst the Franks, dwelling on the banks of the Sala, now the Saale, a river in Upper Saxony, which flows into the Elbe, was so little made to regulate the succession of the kings of France, that when it was first promulgated, France was not even a kingdom;† besides, this rule of descent in males alone, differed from that of all the great fiefs dependent on the French crown.

F.—It is granted that the decision of the states was governed more by the force of invariable custom than by positive law; it being found, that during the first and second race, that the daughters of those Merovingian and Carlovingian kings of France, who died without male issue, had been constantly excluded from the throne; and since the accession of the third race, from Hugh Capet to Lewis Hutin, the crown had descended from father to son for eleven generations, consequently not affording an opportunity of discussing the question.

A.—Some partizans ridiculously asserted, that the

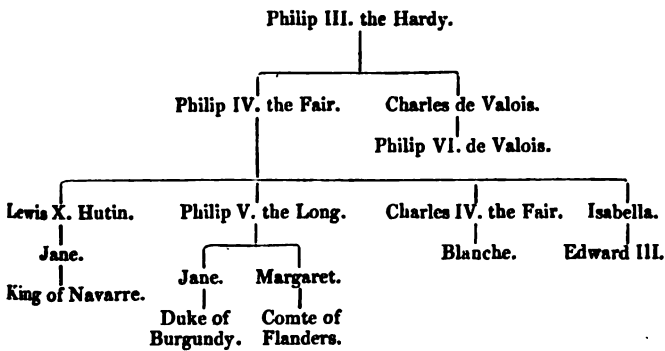
* Mezerai, tom. 1.

† Montesq. liv. 28.

throne of France was so noble, that it could not admit a woman;* others excluded the fair sex on the strength of a passage in scripture: "Consider the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin;" thence it was concluded that females, who ought to spin, ought not to reign in the kingdom of the lilies.^b

P.—But as a counterpoise to the weight of this argument, neither do the lilies toil, but a prince ought to toil; and I think that I have seen it asserted, that the supposed lily in the arms of France is really the head of a halbert.^c

F.—In consequence of the decree of the states, Philip the Long succeeded his brother. This reign was also short: Philip dying in 1322, left two or more daughters, who made no pretension to the crown; he was succeeded by the third brother, Charles the Fair, whose reign was equally brief, as he died 1328, leaving a daughter. The vacant throne was immediately filled by Philip de Valois, cousin-german to the deceased king. But the genealogy may be better understood from a table than from any detail:



The slightest inspection of this table will at once

* Mezerai, tom. 1.

^b Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*.

^c Ibid.

overthrow all the pretensions of Edward to the crown of France, by any known rule of inheritance or descent whatever; as whether the Salique law were admitted or rejected, his claim appears equally futile and preposterous. One French writer is so much put out of temper by its unreasonableness, that he says, had Edward stood in need of the assistance of the Jews, he would have assumed the title of Messiah.

A.—Edward was reduced to the quibble of asserting, that though his mother Isabella, on account of her sex, was incapable of succeeding, he himself, inheriting through her, was liable to no such objection, and might claim in right of propinquity.

P.—But this notable argument is immediately refuted, by considering that the daughter of Lewis Hutin had one son, and the two daughters of Philip the Long likewise one son apiece; all these males were living, and by the admission of such a plea, stood before the English king. Besides, it was so contrary to established principles in every country in Europe, that no person in France thought of Edward's claim; and when brought before the states, it was unanimously rejected; and Edward appeared so well satisfied with the equity of the decision, as to perform homage in person to Philip, as his liege lord, for the province of Guienne.*

P.—What unexpected circumstance induced Edward to revive his pretensions?

A.—Robert of Artois, a prince of the blood royal, having been deprived of his inheritance of that country, by a sentence considered iniquitous, was seduced to attempt its recovery by resorting to the unwarrantable means of forgery;^b banished by Philip for this offence, he was favourably received by Edward; and burning with revenge, he endeavoured to revive the neglected

* Rymer, vol. 4. Froissart.

^b Froissart.

claim of the English monarch to the crown of France, by suggesting the probability of its success: "I made Philip de Valois King of France, (said he, meaning, I suppose, as a member of the states, which decided in favour of the Salique law,) and by your assistance I will depose him for his ingratitude." When Philip complained of the protection afforded to the Comte d'Artois, Edward retorted the encouragement given to Robert Bruce and the Scottish malcontents; and thus with a vague feeling of animosity, without a declared, specific object, both monarchs prepared for war. Philip made numerous alliances with many of the neighbouring princes; and Edward's chief dependance was upon the friendship of the Flemings.^a

F.—These people, alone rich, whilst all around were poor, thus early exhibited the immense advantages derived to a state from industry and commerce.

A.—They exhibited too, at this juncture, somewhat of the wantonness of newly-acquired prosperity, aspiring to a greater degree of independence than was customary with the feudal usages; they had irregularly shaken off their allegiance to their ancient earl, and their counsels were now directed by James Von Arteveld, a brewer of metheglin, at Ghent.^b This person exhibits no very favourable specimen of a democratic leader: more arbitrary than the lawful counts of Flanders, he placed and displaced magistrates at his pleasure; he was always accompanied by a guard, who, at the least signal, instantly assassinated any one that happened to give him the smallest umbrage.^c Von Arteveld, after enjoying such despotic and unlimited authority, was a few years after murdered by his former partizans among the populace, in an endeavour to

^a Froissart.^b Ibid.^c Ibid.

transfer the province to the Prince of Wales.^a But during the continuance of his power, his friendship was sought by Edward with much assiduity; and by his advice, as the Flemings pretended to feel scruples in taking arms against their liege lord, the King of France,^b Edward was induced to assume that title, a measure productive of many miseries to both kingdoms. He now took the field, and entered France with an army of fifty thousand men, amongst whom there were but few English; he was opposed by Philip, with an army of double the number, who with great prudence avoided any unnecessary hazard, thinking it sufficient to elude the attack of his enemy. Edward, unwilling to engage so great a superiority, was compelled to return into Flanders, and disband his army (1340).^c

P.—Such then was the fruitless, and almost ridiculous conclusion of Edward's mighty preparations.

A.—He possessed however too much spirit to be discouraged by the disappointment of his first campaign; and though his consuming expences had been incurred for no purpose, he summoned a parliament. That body now began to assume a more important station than it had yet exercised in the English government; it supplied the king's necessities indeed, but clogged its grants with conditions^d which, though seemingly at the time of small importance, yet established a precedent which could not afterwards be well disputed. Another remarkable particular of this parliament, is its declaration that, though Edward had assumed the arms and title of the King of France, it owed him no obedience in that capacity, but that the two kingdoms must ever remain distinct and independent.^e

F.—An observation which one would think was

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

^c Walsingham.

^d Knyghton.

^e Stat. 14 Edward III.

sufficiently declaratory of the pernicious nature of Edward's pursuit; had he succeeded, the protestation of parliament would have been but a frail security against England's becoming a province of France.

A.—In renewing his attempt the next year (1340,) Edward was encouraged by a great naval victory off the harbour of Sluys. Sea-fights before the use of artillery made less noise; but were far more sanguinary than at present; thirty thousand of the French, it is said, with two of their admirals, were killed, and a large division being panic-struck, leaped from the ships, and two thousand perished in the waves.^a

F.—With what difficulty the truth reached the ears of kings in these days, we may judge, when informed, that Philip remained in ignorance of this event, so important and so necessary to be told, till his buffoon, in a seeming rage, came into the presence, crying out, "Cowardly English! dastardly English!" and when Philip asked the reason, he replied, "Because they durst not leap out of their ships into the sea, as our brave Frenchmen did."^b

A.—The lustre of this victory increased the king's reputation amongst his allies, who again assembled a prodigious army, and Edward marched to the frontiers of France at the head of one hundred thousand men.^c Philip, with an army still more numerous, adhered to the prudent resolution of putting nothing to hazard, hoping thus to weary out his enemy. Edward, fatigued and irritated with the fruitless siege of Tournay, challenged the French monarch to decide his claims by single combat; to which Philip replied, with a very insulting coolness, that it became not a vassal to challenge his liege lord. And thus this campaign, like the former,

^a Froissart. Hemingf.

^b Walsingham.

^c Rymer, vol. 4.

ending in nothing, Edward was glad to conclude, by the mediation of his mother-in-law, the Countess of Hainault, a truce for a year (1340).^a

P.—Here then is a second termination of the contest, if contest it might be called, commenced with an exorbitant expenditure, and continued without profit and without glory.

A.—Edward, put into very bad humour, privately returned home. Reaching the Tower by night, he found it unguarded, and he vented his peevishness on the negligent governor, by rigorously confining him in prison.^b Desirous of throwing the blame of miscarriage from his own shoulders, his vengeance fell next upon the collectors of the taxes, and lastly, upon Stratford, archbishop of Canterbury, to whom that department of the revenue had been committed, forbidding him to take his seat in parliament. But the primate, far from being intimidated, as his conduct had been strictly correct, boldly set Edward at defiance: he appeared before the gates of the palace in his pontifical robes, holding the crosier in his hand, accompanied by a pompous train of priests and attendants; and as parliament was as much out of temper as the king, on account of the enormous drain of the national treasure, Edward was compelled, though with a very ill grace, to be reconciled to the archbishop,^c who likewise made some concession; and the king submitted to a further curtailment of the royal prerogative.

P.—After so much humiliation, we expect to see the truce between France and England ripen into a solid peace.

A.—Edward would probably have dropped his claim, had not a disputed succession in Brittany anew

^a Froissart.

^b Ypod. Neust.

^c Anglia Sacra, vol. 1.

enkindled his ambition, by opening a more probable prospect of success. The dispute, in itself though of trivial interest to England, led to important consequences. The claimants to that duchy were, John, count de Montfort, the male heir; and Charles de Blois, who had married the daughter of the late duke, and who was himself nephew to the French king. De Montfort, sensible that he could expect no favour from Philip, made a voyage to England, and offered to perform homage to Edward for the duchy of Brittany.*

P.—Little negotiation could be necessary to conclude a treaty between two princes so immediately connected by mutual interest.

A.—Edward saw at once the advantage of possessing an ally whose territories afforded him an immediate entrance into the heart of France, and he agreed to render the required support; but an accident soon occurred which well nigh rendered this well-laid scheme abortive, the capture of the Count de Montfort by Philip, who detained him a close prisoner in the tower of the Louvre.

F.—*Dux femina facti*: this desperate state of affairs was retrieved by a woman. But I leave in your hands the continuation of the story.

A.—Jane, countess of Montfort, daughter of the Count of Flanders, roused from her feminine occupations by the prospect of overwhelming danger, courageously undertook to support the falling fortunes of her family. As the partizans of Montfort possessed the advantage of holding the chief towns in the duchy, the Countess went from place to place, encouraging the garrisons and arranging the proper plan of defence. After she had put the whole province into a state of

* Froissart.

safety, she shut herself up in the fortress of Hennebonne, to wait the arrival of the succours promised by Edward.

F.—This lady, if we may credit Froissart, was a perfect Amazon, not only directing military affairs, but boldly fighting, sword in hand.

A.—The castle being presently surrounded by the Count de Blois, with a powerful army, one day, as Jane perceived that the besiegers had neglected a distant quarter of their camp, she immediately sallied out, at the head of a body of two hundred horse, and did great execution, setting fire to the tents, baggage, and magazines, of the enemy; but preparing to return, she found herself intercepted, when instantly taking her resolution, she ordered her men to make the best of their way by flight to Brest; at which place she collected a reinforcement of five hundred horse, broke unexpectedly through the adversary's camp, and entered the town of Hennebonne amidst the shouts and acclamations of the garrison.* But the reiterated attacks of the besiegers having made several formidable breaches in the walls, it became necessary to treat of a capitulation, and the Bishop of Laon was actually engaged with Charles de Blois on that subject; when the countess, who had mounted a high tower, looking anxiously towards the sea, descried some sails at a distance, and she exclaimed, "The succours, behold the English succours! no capitulation." This fleet had on board a body of heavy armed cavalry, with six thousand archers, under the command of Sir Walter Manny, a Flemish knight, who had come to England in the train of Queen Philippa, and who was one of the best captains of the age. Soon after entering the harbour, Sir Walter

* Froissart.

immediately beat off the besiegers, and compelled them to decamp.*

F.—For which good service, says the same romantic chronicler, Froissart, the countess came down from the tower to meet these knights, and with a cheerful countenance, kissed Sir Walter Manny and all his companions, one after the other, two or three times, like a bold and valiant dame.

A.—The kings of France and England now entered as principals into the war, and Edward went over to Brittany with a reinforcement of twelve thousand men; but he exhibited no remarkable military talent, and had so much the worst of the contest, that he was glad to agree to a cessation of arms for three years. Having thus extricated himself from the present difficulty, he affected to consult his parliament, who advised him not to be amused by a fraudulent truce^b (1344,) and the war was immediately renewed. The province of Guienne being exposed to much danger, Edward sent thither his cousin the Earl of Derby, son to the Earl of Lancaster. This very accomplished and excellent prince not only defended the province committed to his charge, but made successful inroads into the neighbouring country, taking several of the French fortresses. In one of these incursions, Derby having promised his men all the plunder, a private soldier broke into a mint-master's house, during the attack of the town of Bergerac, where he found so large a treasure that he declined retaining it, as too great a reward, and brought it to the earl, who liberally answered, "It is not my maxim to play boy's play; keep thou the money, were it thrice as much."^c

F.—The cause of Derby's continued success was

* Froissart.

^b Parl. Hist. vol. 1, p. 277.

^c Walsingham.

the difficulty under which the French finances at that time laboured, and the discontent, or rather mutiny, of the people, occasioned by the gabelle, or monopoly of salt. This afforded Edward an opportunity to utter a royal witticism, saying that he saw his adversary was determined to reign by the *Salique* law.*

P.—What may be the meaning of this gabelle upon salt, the continuance of which for several centuries was a cause of so much discontent in France?

F.—The term ‘gabelle’ is thought to be derived from the Hebrew ‘gab,’ signifying tribute; others say it is from the Saxon ‘gafel,’ a word of the same meaning. The tax itself was one of the most tyrannical ever imposed on any nation: every householder being compelled to purchase a certain portion of this salt, at an exorbitant price from the government, according to the number of persons which his family contained, whether they consumed it or not.

A.—At length the King of France raised a considerable army, which he put under the command of his son, the Duke of Normandy, to oppose the attacks of Derby. At this time one of those circumstances occurred which, though of small importance in itself, yet strongly marks the manners of the age, and is told by Froissart with much genuine glee and picturesque effect: the French besieging the town of Angoulême, the governor, Lord Norwich, finding himself reduced to extremities, was obliged to employ a stratagem to save his garrison: he appeared on the walls, and desired a parley; the Duke of Normandy approaching, observed, that he supposed Lord Norwich meant to surrender; “Not at all,” replied the governor; “but as to-morrow is the feast of the Virgin, to whom I know that you, sir,

* Henault, l’Abrégé Chronolog.

as well as myself, bear a great devotion, I desire a cessation of arms for that day." The proposal was agreed to, and Norwich, having packed up all his baggage, marched out and advanced towards the French camp: the French, imagining they were about to be attacked, ran to their arms, but Norwich sent a messenger to remind their general of his engagement: the Duke, a man of honour, who piqued himself on faithfully keeping his word, exclaimed, "I perceive that the governor has outwitted me, but let us be content with gaining the place;" and the English were allowed to pass through the camp unmolested. Edward, now understanding the danger to which Guienne was exposed, prepared a force for its relief, and he embarked with a considerable army, taking with him his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, now at the age of fifteen. The fleet was twice beaten back by contrary winds, and driven on the coast of Cornwall. The king, in despair of reaching Guienne, listened to the advice of Geoffrey d'Harcourt, a noble exile of Normandy, who recommended an incursion into that province, as promising more success, the country being rich in plunder and now left unprotected.*

F.—This same Geoffrey d'Harcourt, by the death of Robert d'Artois from a wound received in battle, succeeded that author of all the calamities which befel his country for more than a century, in the invidious office of assisting Edward in every enterprize against France.

P.—His advice being adopted of invading Normandy, it does not give a very exalted idea of the extent of Edward's military views, that a powerful force intended for one point should, by the short delay

* Froissart.

occasioned by contrary winds, change its destination, with no other specific object than plunder.

A.—But this force, operating as a diversion, might relieve Guienne as effectually as more direct assistance. Edward safely disembarked his army at La Hogue, in Normandy: it consisted of four thousand cavalry, or men at arms, ten thousand archers, and eighteen thousand foot: ^a the latter chiefly consisting of light and disorderly troops, they immediately spread themselves over the adjacent country, burning, spoiling, and plundering every place of which they became masters. The city of Caen, from its size and wealth, soon attracted their attention: it was carried by assault, and so great was the pillage, that Edward loaded his fleet with the spoil, and despatched it with three hundred of the richest citizens to England, whose ransom was to afford an additional profit. Edward marched next to Rouen, in hopes of treating that city in the same manner; but here he found the bridge over the Seine broken down, and heard that the King of France in person had arrived with a large army; he therefore marched along the banks of this river, wasting the whole country till he reached sight of Paris itself. ^b

P.—What may be considered as the original design of this campaign?

A.—The relief of Guienne and the acquisition of plunder; but Edward having sent back his fleet, he formed the plan of traversing through France to the north, and securing his retreat in the friendly country of Flanders. In pursuance of this hazardous undertaking, it was his first object to pass the Seine; but finding all the bridges broken down, he made a feint by advancing further up that river, and immediately returning by the same road he arrived at Poissy, the

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

bridge of which town he repaired with incredible celerity and passed over with all his forces.

F.—If we attend to the map, we shall see that Edward having passed the Seine, was enclosed between that river and the Somme, with the King of France in full pursuit, expecting to surround and compel the surrender of the English army.

A.—In this extremity Edward, fully aware of his danger, finding all the bridges of the Somme also broken down, or strongly guarded, published a great reward to any one who should point out a passage over that river: one of his prisoners, a peasant, Gobin Agace, whose name has been preserved by the execrations of his countrymen, thus tempted, brought the king to a ford called Blanchetaque, a little below the town of Abbeville, which might be passed at low water. The king found the opposite banks lined with ten thousand French troops under Gondemar de Faye, an officer of reputation; but aware of the imminency of his danger, with admirable celerity he threw himself into the river, sword in hand, at the head of his troops, driving the French, who in vain disputed the passage, from their station and chased them to a distance on the plain. The French King with his army arrived at the ford when the rear-guard of the English were passing, but the rising of the tide prevented a pursuit.*

F.—This passage of the Somme, as a military movement, is doubtless admirable, but we cannot shut our eyes to the singular good fortune of Edward: had Philip arrived but an hour sooner, this manœuvre, so successfully executed, would in all probability have terminated in absolute ruin.

A.—Edward, sensible that the French would be

* Froissart.

eager to prevent his escape, and that his army, in marching over the plains of Picardy, would be much exposed to the incursions of their cavalry, determined to hazard a battle, in the hope that the rage of Philip would hurry him into some ill-concerted action; nor was he disappointed in this expectation: choosing a rising ground near the village of Crecy, he disposed his army in excellent order in three lines, determined to await the arrival of the enemy: his soldiers were seated on the ground, when they first saw the French advance, but they immediately rose up undauntedly, and fell into the ranks. The numerical force of Philip was prodigious, amounting to one hundred and twenty thousand men: in the battle, besides the French monarch, were three crowned heads: John, king of Bohemia; his son, the King of the Romans; and the King of Majorca: the French army, like the English, was formed into three lines, but imperfectly; Philip had made a hasty march, in some confusion, from Abbeville, seeming to consider that could he but bring his enemy to an engagement, his work was done.*

P.—How contrary was this rashness to his former prudent conduct in the campaigns of Flanders, a few years before.

A.—The battle began with an attack by fifteen thousand Genoese bowmen, who marched forward, and leaped thrice with a great cry: their arrows did little execution, as the strings of their bows had been relaxed by a sudden tempest; the English archers, now taking their bows from their cases, poured in a shower of arrows upon this multitude, and soon threw them into confusion: the Genoese falling back upon the French cavalry, were by them cut to pieces, and being allowed

* Froissart.

no passage, were thus prevented from again forming in the rear: this absurd inhumanity lost the battle, as the young Prince of Wales, taking advantage of the irretrievable disorder, led on his line at once to the charge. The danger at this moment being considerable, a message was sent to the king, who was posted on a small eminence near a windmill, requiring assistance for the prince. Edward enquired if his son were slain or wounded; "Nothing of the kind (answered the messenger), but he is so hardly pressed that he has great need of your help." "Return, sir, to those who sent you (said the king); and tell them not to send again to me this day, as long as my son has life; and say, that I command them to let the boy win his spurs; for I am determined, if it please God, that all the honour of the day shall be his and theirs who are about him."^a In vain did the King of France endeavour to rally his discomfited forces, though he displayed great valour, and had a horse killed under him; the whole army took to flight in inconceivable confusion, and were put to the sword without quarter, till darkness stopped the carnage. "No one can describe or imagine," says Froissart, "the bad management and disorder of the French army, though their troops were out of number." Philip was led from the field by John of Hainault, and he rode till he came to the castle of La Broyes, where he found the gates shut: ordering the governor to be summoned, when the latter enquired, it being dark, who it was that called at so late an hour, he answered, "Open, open, governor; it is the fortune of France:" and accompanied by five barons only he entered the castle.^b

F.—How striking is the difference between the

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

effects of discipline and the want of it; the results of a battle won and a battle lost.

A.—When Edward came down from his post, he advanced with his whole battalion to meet the Prince of Wales, whom he embraced and kissed, saying, “Sweet son, God give you perseverance in your honourable cause; you are my son, for valiantly have you acquitted yourself this day; you have shown yourself worthy of empire.” The prince, as modest as brave, bowed very low, and gave all the honour of the victory to the skill of his royal parent.^a

F.—Whether the English had four pieces of cannon,^b which contributed to the success of the day at Crecy, as asserted by some historians, is uncertain. Froissart says not a word about them. Cannon not being mentioned by any writer as used at the battle of Poitiers, ten years later, throws some discredit on their introduction now.

A.—The battle of Crecy was fought on Saturday, August 25, 1346; but on the next day there fell more straggling soldiers than in the attack. On the field were left slain the Kings of Bohemia and Majorca, many of the great nobility of France, and forty thousand persons of various inferior condition. This astonishing slaughter cost the English no more than the loss of three knights, one esquire, and very few private soldiers.^c

F.—This prodigious disproportion seems to imply a rout rather than a battle, and thus the very completeness of the victory, by a strange sort of paradox, takes away something of its merit.

A.—The fate of the King of Bohemia was singular: having heard the order of battle, he said to the persons

^a Froissart.

^b Villani, lib. 12.

^c Froissart.

about him, "Gentlemen, you are all my people, friends and brethren at arms this day; therefore, as I am blind, I request of you to lead me so far into the engagement that I may strike one stroke with my sword." The knights replied, "They would lead him forward directly;" and in order that they might not lose him in the crowd, they fastened all the reins of their horses together, and put the king at their head, that he might gratify his wish: it is needless to add that the whole party perished.* The Prince of Wales and his successors have ever since assumed the Bohemian crest of three ostrich feathers, with the motto *Ich dien*, "I serve," as a memorial of this great victory.

F.—Most persons will now consider this blind sovereign as foolishly prodigal of life, but his conduct in that age was extolled as an act of unprecedented heroism.

A.—Edward remained cool amidst this tumult of success: far from expecting that the victory of Crecy would be followed by the total subjection of the disputed kingdom, he seemed rather to moderate his views, and to limit his ambition to the conquest of Calais, which he hoped, as the key of France, would facilitate the way to more considerable advantages, by affording at all times an easy entrance; he therefore presented himself before the place, but well knowing the integrity of John de Viene, the governor, and the little chance of obtaining the town by force, he resolved to reduce it by famine, and for that purpose he blockaded it for nearly twelve months, defeating various attempts made by Philip to compel him to raise the siege. The full flow of Edward's prosperity was now increased, not only by the success of several military

* Froissart.

undertakings of the Earl of Derby in Guienne, but by the 'capture of David Bruce, king of Scotland, who, having returned home from a long residence in France, was persuaded by Philip, his ally, to invade the northern counties of England: he accordingly carried his ravages as far as Durham, where his army was signally defeated at Neville's Cross (1346) by Lord Percy, and himself taken prisoner by an English 'squire, John Copeland, who carried off his prize to Ogle Castle on the river Blythe.*

F.—Froissart represents this victory as acquired by the wisdom and spirit of his patroness, Queen Philippa, who, he says, could scarcely be prevailed upon to absent herself from the field of battle; but as that princess had undergone a recent confinement, it is probable that she had little further to do with the victory than endeavouring to deprive John Copeland of the custody of his royal prisoner.

A.—But John Copeland very shrewdly refused to deliver him up, and repaired to the king before Calais, who, on his being presented, exclaimed, "Ha, welcome, my 'squire, who by his valour has captured my adversary, the King of Scotland." John Copeland, falling on his knee, replied, "If God, out of his great kindness, has given me the King of Scotland, and permitted me to conquer him in arms, no one ought to be jealous of it; for God, when he pleases, can send his grace to a poor 'squire, as well as to a great lord. Sir, do not take it amiss, that I did not surrender him to the orders of my lady, the queen; for I hold my lands of you, and my oath is to you, and not to her, except it be through choice." The king answered, "John, the loyal service you have done us, and our esteem for

* Froissart.

your valour is so great, that it may well serve you as an excuse, and shame upon all those that bear you any ill will: you will now return home, and take your prisoner, the King of Scotland, and convey him to my wife; and by way of remuneration, I will assign lands as near your house as I can choose, to the amount of five hundred pounds a year.”^a Queen Philippa, securing her royal prisoner in the tower, crossed the sea at Dover, and was received in the English camp before Calais with all the chivalric éclat due to her rank, her sex, and her success. The siege now approached to its conclusion; the town being pressed by the last extremity of famine, John de Viene offered to surrender on the conditions of life and liberty to the inhabitants; **but the king, incensed at their obstinate resistance, refused to hear any terms but those of unlimited submission.**

F.—And here we have Froissart's very questionable story, which, having been dramatized both in France and England, has acquired a popular credence to which in itself it is not entitled. This author relates, that Edward at length consented to grant the lives of the inhabitants, excepting six of the citizens, who should deliver to him the keys of the city, with ropes about their necks, bareheaded and barefooted. When these terms were made known to the people of Calais, they were plunged into the deepest distress; to sacrifice six of their fellow citizens to certain destruction for signaling their valour in the common cause appeared even more horrible than that general punishment with which they had been threatened, and they became incapable of forming any resolution. At length Eustace de St. Pierre, one of the richest merchants of the place, vo-

^a Froissart.

luntarily offered himself as one of these six devoted victims; his noble example was soon imitated by five others; and these genuine patriots appeared before Edward in the manner prescribed, laid the keys at his feet, and were ordered to be led to immediate execution; but the queen, falling on her knees, with tears in her eyes begged their lives, and thus saved them from punishment: her request having been obtained, she carried them to her tent, ordered a repast to be set before them, and making them a present of money, dismissed them in safety (1347).

A.—It is pretty evident that these burgesses were merely a deputation in the guise of criminals, as was frequent in those days on similar occasions, of which we had an instance in the surrender of Stirling Castle to Edward the First; thus the circumstance in the siege of Calais which least deserves to be remarked, has become the most so. Edward commanded all the inhabitants to evacuate the town, and he re-peopled it with English, a policy which probably long preserved the town to his successors.

F.—It may surprise some persons to learn that in after-times Calais was permitted to send representatives to the English House of Commons.*

A.—A truce between the two kingdoms was at length concluded, through the mediation of the Pope's legate (1348). During the suspension of arms which it occasioned, Edward nearly lost the fruits of his toil, by an accident which is scarcely worth recounting, unless to prove his determined love of fighting. De Charni, who commanded the French troops in the neighbourhood of Calais, communicated to Aimeri de Pavie, an Italian, to whom Edward had intrusted the

* Browne Willis, Parl. Not.

town, a plan for delivering it to the King of France. Whether Aimeri really intended to betray his trust is uncertain, but the secret got whispered to Edward, and it was agreed that the contrivance should be turned to the destruction of the enemy: a day was appointed for the admission of the French troops, and Edward with the Black Prince arrived secretly the night before at Calais: a band of French soldiers was now admitted at the postern, and Aimeri receiving the stipulated sum promised to open the great gate to the enemy, who was waiting without: as the gate opened, Edward and his party rushed forth, shouting, "A Manny, a Manny, to the rescue:" a fierce engagement ensued, and the king, who fought as a private man under the standard of Sir Walter Manny, became desirous of trying a single combat with Eustace de Ribaumont, a French knight. A sharp encounter took place between them; twice was Edward beaten to the ground, and the victory was long undecided, till Ribaumont perceiving himself to be left almost alone called out, "Sir knight, I yield myself your prisoner." The French officers who fell into the hands of the English were treated with much courtesy, and admitted to sup with the Prince of Wales: it was at this banquet that the king came into the apartment and bestowed the highest encomiums upon the valour of Ribaumont, and taking from his own head a string of pearls, placed it upon the head of the knight, saying, "I desire you to wear it a year for my sake. I know you take delight in the company of ladies and demoiselles; let them all know from whose hand you received the present;" and the Frenchman was the next day honourably dismissed without a ransom.* This Eustace de Ribaumont afterwards was killed at the battle of

* Froissart.

Poictiers; and Aimeri de Pavie, being surrounded at his castle of Fretun, near Calais, by De Charni with some French troops, was made prisoner and put to death, with circumstances of much cruelty, in the market place of St. Omers.* But fatigued with so much fighting and bloodshed, it is time to repose.

Majoresque cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.

* Froissart.

DISSERTATION IX.

SECTION II.

EDWARD III. - - from 1349 to 1377.

A.—FROM the noise and tumult of war abroad, let us turn our eyes to the splendid court of Windsor Castle at home. To reward the military exploits of his captains, Edward at this period (1349) instituted the order of the Garter, in imitation of some orders of a similar nature established in different parts of Europe; this badge of distinction being intended to excite in the nobility a spirit of valour, emulation, and obedience.^a

P.—Such being the acknowledged motive of the founder, what circumstances induced Edward to adopt so unmeaning a symbol as the garter, and connect it with the insignia of St. George?

F.—A variety of explanations has been offered, but all without any substantial proof: it has been said, that Edward gave the word “garter” at the battle of Crecy, or that he fixed his garter at the end of his lance, as a signal on that occasion.^b Another opinion is, that the order was merely the revival of an institution began by Richard the First at the siege of Acre: Richard resolving to storm the town, distributed to some of his principal officers certain leather thongs, to be tied round the leg to distinguish them during the assault. But the story of the Countess of Salisbury, supposed to be Edward’s mistress, having dropped her garter at a ball in dancing is more generally received,^c

^a Ashmole, Order of the Garter.^b Camden, Attrebat.^c Ashmole.

though not mentioned by any author before Polydore Virgil.

A.—This origin, though frivolous, is perfectly in accordance with the manners of the times, and it is difficult otherwise to account for the terms of the motto.

F.—Yet even the story of the Countess of Salisbury has different versions: one relates, that when the king picked up the garter, the lady imagining that he had some other designs, expressed her surprise; to obviate which Edward replied, *Honi soit qui mal y pense*—"Shame be to him who evil thinks." Another account is, that Edward, perceiving the circumstance to excite a smile among the courtiers, uttered this celebrated exclamation. A still different story represents Queen Philippa herself to have once dropped her blue garter in leaving the king's presence, which the attendants not regarding, Edward, knowing its owner, commanded it to be taken up and given to him, saying, "You make small account of this garter, but in a little time the best of you shall reverence the like:" and the motto was occasioned by the queen's answer when Edward asked her what she thought men would conjecture of her conduct in dropping her garter in so careless a manner.*

P.—As Edward was always esteemed an excellent husband, and lived in the greatest conjugal harmony with Queen Philippa, in admitting the former explanation, why should it be supposed that the Countess of Salisbury was his mistress at all?

A.—The report, I imagine, originates in a story of Froissart's, whose credulity was certainly very frequently imposed upon: he relates that David, king of Scotland, having laid siege to Werk Castle, in Northumberland (1342), it was strenuously defended by the

* Du Chêne, Hist. Gen. d'Angleterre.

Countess of Salisbury, whose husband was then a prisoner in France. The Scots, on hearing of Edward's approach to relieve the castle, departed, after committing great havoc and ravages.

F.—But such particulars cannot be reconciled with known historical dates and with the general tenor of authentic events.*

A.—However, though Froissart's drawing may not be exactly correct, it must be admitted that his colouring is brilliant, and I must give you an extract, which, though somewhat long, as it exhibits the pink of chivalry in love, will not be found without interest:

“Edward, taking ten or twelve knights with him, went to the castle to salute the Countess of Salisbury, and to examine what damage the Scots had done.

“The moment the countess heard of the king's approach she ordered all the gates to be thrown open, and went to meet him, most richly attired, insomuch that no one could help looking at her but with wonder and admiration, for her great beauty and affability of behaviour: when she came to the king she made a very lowly reverence and conducted him into the castle.

“Every one was delighted with her; the king could not take his eyes off her, as he thought he had never seen so beautiful or sprightly a lady, so that a spark of refined love struck upon his heart, which lasted a long time, and thus they entered the castle hand in hand. The lady led him first to the hall, and then to his chamber; the king kept his eyes so continually upon her, that the gentle dame was quite abashed: after he had sufficiently examined his apartment, he retired to a window, and leaning on it, fell into a profound reverie.

* Dugdale, Baronage, vol. 1, p. 645.

“The countess went to welcome the other knights and 'squires, and she ordered dinner to be made ready, the tables to be set, and the hall ornamented: returning to the king with a cheerful countenance, she said to him, ‘Dear sir, what are you musing on? saving your grace, it is not good; you ought rather to be in high spirits, for having driven your enemies before you, without their having had the courage to wait for you: leave the trouble of thinking to others.’ The king replied, ‘O dear lady, you must know, that since I entered this castle an idea has struck my mind that I cannot choose but think; what may be the event I know not, but I cannot divest my mind of it.’ ‘Dear sir,’ replied the lady, ‘you ought to be of good cheer, to feast with your friends, and leave off meditating: if the King of Scotland have vexed you by doing harm to your kingdom, make yourself amends at his expense, as you have done before; therefore, if you please, come into the hall to your knights, for dinner will soon be ready.’

“‘Ah! dear lady,’ said the king, ‘far other things than what you imagine touch my heart; for, in truth, your lovely demeanour, the perfections and beauties which I have seen you to possess have very much surprised me, and have so deeply impressed my heart, that my happiness depends on meeting a return from you to my flame, which no denial can extinguish.’

“‘Sweet sir,’ replied the countess, ‘do not amuse yourself in laughing at or in tempting me, for I cannot believe you mean what you have just spoken, or that so noble and gallant a prince would think to dishonour me or my husband, who is so valiant a knight, that has served you faithfully, and who on your account now lies in a foreign prison; certainly, sir, this would not

add to your glory: such a thought has never once entered my mind, and I trust in God it never will, for any man living; and if I were so culpable, it would become you to blame me, and in strict justice have me punished.'

"This virtuous lady then quitted the king, who was quite astonished, and she went to the hall to hasten the dinner; afterwards returning, attended by the knights, she said to him, 'Sir, come to the hall; your knights are waiting for you to wash their hands, for they, as well as you, have been long fasting.'

"At dinner the king ate very little, and was the whole time pensive, casting his eyes, whenever he had opportunity, towards the countess; such behaviour surprised his friends, for they had never seen the like before, and they imagined it was because the Scots had escaped him.

"The king remained at the castle the whole day, without knowing what to do with himself; sometimes he remonstrated with himself, that honour and loyalty forbade him to admit such treason and falsehood into his heart as to wish to dishonour so virtuous a lady and so gallant a knight as her husband was, and who had ever so faithfully served him: at other times his passion was so strong that his honour and loyalty were forgotten: thus did he pass that day and a sleepless night in debating the matter in his own mind.

"At day-break he arose and drew out his whole army. Upon taking leave of the countess, he said, 'My dear lady, God preserve you till I return; and I entreat that you will think well of what I have said, and have the goodness to give me a different answer.' 'Dear sir,' replied the countess, 'God, of his infinite goodness, preserve you, and drive from your heart such

villanous thoughts; for I am, and ever shall be, ready to serve you, consistently with my own honour and with yours.’”

F.—This conflict of passion in the king with regard to the lady, and the anxiety of the lady with regard to the dinner, are so amusing in their way, that we cannot but regret not a word of the story should be true.

A.—This paragon of dames was Katharine, daughter of William de Grandison: her husband was the first Earl of Salisbury, of the family of Montacute. Froissart relates, that Edward gave a grand tournament at Windsor in honour of the countess, who felt great scruples in attending, apprehensive of the king's sinister designs; but he adds, that she was so discreet as not to acquaint her husband with the cause.

P.—Our poet Drayton, following a fiction of the Italian novelist, Bandello, has represented the Black Prince as the countess's gallant, and has dictated “an heroicall epistle,” alike calculated with this story of Froissart to mislead the historical student.

F.—To set this matter right, we must refer to our authentic genealogist Dugdale, who relates^a that Joan, the Fair Maid of Kent, who subsequently was married to the Black Prince, and who was daughter to that Earl of Kent executed at the beginning of this reign, clandestinely espoused Sir Thomas Holand, steward of the household to the Earl of Salisbury, the son of this our garter countess; but Salisbury himself falling in love with Joan, who was extremely beautiful, contracted a marriage with that princess, in spite of the opposition of her first husband, who complained bitterly of the wrong. The lady, having two strings to

^a Baronage, vol 1, p. 647.

her bow, declared herself incapable of deciding so weighty a controversy, and an appeal to the Pope was the consequence: his Holiness gave a decree in favour of Sir Thomas Holand. The Fair Maid of Kent, not the discreetest person in the world, may in the interval have been called Countess of Salisbury, and hence, I apprehend, has originated some of the romance connected with that title.

A.—The original knights received into the order of the Garter were the following twenty-five persons, besides the sovereign, who had all distinguished themselves in military service:

KING EDWARD III.	EDWARD, PRINCE OF WALES
Henry Plantagenet, Duke of Lancaster	Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick
Piers de Greilly, Capal de Buche	Ralph Stafford, Earl of Stafford
William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury	Roger Mortimer, Earl of Marche
Sir John Lisle	Sir Bartholomew Burghersh
Sir John Beauchamp	Sir John Mohun
Sir Hugh Courtney	Sir Thomas Holand
Sir John Grey	Sir Richard Fitz-Simon
Sir Miles Stapelton	Sir Thomas Wale
Sir Hugh Wrottesley	Sir Nele Loring
Sir John Chandos	Sir James Audeley
Sir Otto Holand	Sir Henry Eam
Sir Sanchet Dabrichcourt	Sir Walter Pavely

Such is the uncertainty of transmitting worldly honours to posterity, that one family only in England, the Wrottesley's, can trace their descent in the male line from any of these worthies.*

F.—Admission to the order has always been considered as one of the highest honours to which a subject can aspire; and as the number of knights, except

* Ashmole.

foreign sovereigns and princes of the blood, has never been enlarged, this badge of distinction continues as honourable as at its first creation. The institution has certainly the advantage of conferring a favour on the most powerful nobleman, without imposing a burden on the nation; and it must be acknowledged that a chapter in its full ceremonial is a very imposing spectacle.

A.—The robes and ornaments may be thought somewhat too gorgeous: at first they were less splendid: indeed a modern knight in grand costume, unless he is conscious of a stately person, must feel overwhelmed with his encumbering finery. Edward the First had a different feeling from the founder of this ostentatious display, for being once asked by a simple religious man, why he, being so potent a prince, went so meanly clad? he answered, “Father, father, you know how God regardeth garments: what can I do more in my royal robes than in this my gaberдинe?”

P.—You have not explained the motive of Edward the Third in connecting his order of the Garter with the patronage of St. George; and how indeed did that person acquire the honour of becoming the tutelary saint of England?

A.—The solution of the latter question will explain the motive of the monarch; but the story of St. George, like so many of our ancient traditions, is attended with considerable difficulty and obscurity: the very existence of such a person has been questioned, chiefly on the ground that he is not mentioned by Eusebius; but it appears that under the ninth persecution of Diocletian, a young man, by name George, a native of Capadocia, of Christian descent and respectable fortune, had entered the Roman service, and at the age of

* Camden, Remains.

twenty had risen to the rank of military tribune: when the imperial decree against the Christians was about to be put into execution, he divested himself of his martial habiliments and bestowed them, with all the money he possessed, upon the poor. Expostulating with the council on the barbarity and injustice of their proceedings, he was seized and carried before the emperor, who proposed various rewards and honours as the price of his apostacy, which George rejecting, was most inhumanly tortured, and the next day (April 23, A. D. 290) was beheaded at Lydda, in Palestine, where his body was interred.*

F.—On this slight foundation, which, though sufficiently probable, is not authenticated by any contemporary authority, has a huge mass of legend and fiction been erected.

A.—The worship of St. George soon became in vogue, and the Arians, desirous of giving credit to their cause, endeavoured to confound the memory of this martyr with a bishop of Alexandria of the same name, the antagonist and afterward the successor of Athanasius, a stout defender of their tenets, but a very worthless and oppressive tyrant, and who was massacred in a tumult by the people of that capital (361). The Arians effected their object with so much success that Pope Gelasius (492) complained that the acts and monuments of St. George, having been collected by infidels and unbelievers with less integrity than so important a business required, were obliged to be disallowed by the Roman church.^b In spite therefore of Mr. Gibbon's opinion, which, from the great popularity of his work, has misled many readers, we must conclude that St. George for England is certainly not the Arian bishop.

* Heylyn, Hist. of St. George. ^b Concil. tom. i; edit. Pet. Crabbe, p. 993.

F.—The worship of the original martyr was early established in Rome itself, notwithstanding the confusion in his history, and we well know that the Catholic church has always been sufficiently careful to exclude what she called heretics from the honour of canonization.

A.—Having been himself a soldier, St. George became the patron saint of military men; churches were erected to his honour in various parts of Europe, and he was in particular favour with the Greek empire; he was always represented as a young man, armed, on horseback. Once in the palace of Constantinople, it seems that the picture of the horse neighed, to the great alarm of the Byzantine court: the dragon is supposed to have been merely a symbol of the great enemy of mankind being overcome by the efforts of the pious Christian, and did not originally accompany the portrait of the saint: the figure of the maid is of still more recent introduction.

F.—The body of St. George having been buried at Lydda, in Palestine, where a stately church was erected to his memory, he was thus early introduced to the notice of the first crusaders.

A.—The reputation of the martyr was much increased by the publication of the celebrated "*Aurea legenda*," or golden legend, by Jacobus de Voragine, archbishop of Genoa, in the thirteenth century. This work is a collection of the lives of the saints, and that of St. George is amongst the number. The archbishop is thought to have adapted his legend to the pictorial representation, and thus it runs: "Once upon a time St. George of Cappadocia came to the country of Lybia, and to the city of Sisena (a town, as Don Quixote said of his

* Nicephorus Gregoras, p. 88.

kingdom, not to be found on the map): near this place was a lake as big as any sea, and in that lake a deadly dragon, which with his breath did poison all the country round, and the poor people were compelled to give him every day two sheep to keep him quiet: at length when all the sheep were nearly consumed, it was appointed by a council to give him one sheep and to add a man or a woman, and then when almost all their sons and daughters had been eaten, it came in turn that the only daughter of the king should be delivered to the dragon, and accordingly, as she was chained to a rock for that purpose, St. George appeared and encountered the dragon in a dreadful conflict, which terminating in a complete victory on his part, the damsel was restored to her afflicted parent, who with all his people embraced the Christian faith."

P.—But why should this chivalric version of the tale of Perseus and Andromeda acquire so peculiar a popularity in the west of Europe?

A.—The great cause of the favour borne to St. George was his visible appearance, at several periods, to the assistance of the crusaders, long indeed before the publication of the legend; the most memorable of which was at the siege of Antioch,* in 1098: the Christians, though they had taken that city, became unable to retain it, and were sorely pressed by a multitude of their enemies, when suddenly an infinite number of heavenly soldiers, all in white, descended from the mountains, with displayed ensigns, the leaders being St. George, St. Maurice, and St. Demetrius, who brandishing their darts, the enemy immediately fled with the loss of one hundred thousand men.

F.—And why, says William of Malmesbury, with

* Vol. 1, p. 328.

inimitable simplicity, might not God send his saints to assist the Christians, as once he sent his angel to assist the Maccabees, both fighting in the same quarrel?^a

A.—How St. George first grew into particular estimation with the English, was the acknowledgment of Richard the First, that to the saint's inspiration in a dream, he was indebted for the idea of distinguishing his companions in the assault of Acre by a garter tied under the left knee; thus continuing in favour with the military part of the nation, Edward the Third, when hotly pressed in his skirmish with Ribault, at Calais, pushing with his sword passionately, cried out, "Ha, St. Edward! ha, St. George!"^b which his soldiers hearing, flocked to him, fell upon the French assailants with great execution, and so released him from the danger; such seem to be the reasons which induced this valorous monarch to place his order of the Garter under the protection of so martial a patron.

F.—St. George being now so highly exalted in England, became more popular than ever, and new legends were invented to extend his fame. Richard Johnson, the author of "The Famous History of the Seven Champions of Christendom," of the age of Queen Elizabeth, has made him an Englishman, being born at Coventry, and marked at his birth with a red bloody cross on his right hand, a golden garter on his left leg, and a red dragon on his breast: as soon as he was born he was conveyed away to the woods by Caleb, a female enchanter. He became a renowned knight-errant; his first exploit was killing a dragon in Egypt, and his last conflict was with a most poisonous dragon at Dunsmere Heath, where the monster was indeed slain, but the poor knight returned to Coventry so

^a De Gest. Ang. Reg. lib. 4.

^b Walsingham.

grievously wounded that he died shortly after; he left three sons, equally valiant with himself, one of whom was the famous Guy of Warwick, and the other two were preferred to places at court.

A.—This legend may contain as much truth as the former, but is so manifestly impertinent, as to provoke impatience. It is now time to return to the court and age of Edward the Third, whose festivities and triumphs were grievously interrupted by the introduction and prevalence of the plague (1348,) which raged not only in England, but throughout Europe; it took its rise in Asia, and destroyed in some countries a fourth, in others a third, and in some places it left not a tenth part of the inhabitants behind. It appears to have been a disease precisely of the same type as that which at the present day afflicts the Turkish provinces: a slight fever, attended with glandular swellings, vomiting, and discharge of blood, which commonly carried off the sufferer in a day or two; it was so contagious as to infect by the breath, and the bare touch of the garments of the deceased often proved fatal.*

F.—The introduction of such diseases is scarcely more extraordinary than their cessation. This calamity seems to have been one of the most general which ever afflicted Europe, and it extended even to the brute creation: its effects in the city of Florence are described by Boccacio with great eloquence and feeling, in the introduction to his well-known Decameron. But the harrowing story of neglect and desertion, of apathy and despair, of the brutality of some, of the avarice of others, presents a similar picture of distress to that which has been often detailed by historians,

* Walsingham. Knyghton.

and from the contemplation of which the mind would willingly escape.

A.—This pestilence, in proportion to the population of the kingdom, must have been even more fatal than the great plague of London during the reign of Charles the Second. In one burying-ground, now the garden of the Charter House, purchased for the occasion by Sir Walter Manny, fifty thousand corpses^a were deposited. It is observable that the poorer classes were the chief sufferers, and most of the nobility escaped. We must not confound this disease, which was called ‘the black death,’ with the sweating sickness, a disorder totally different, and which was imported by the soldiers in the Earl of Richmond’s army from Brittany, when he landed to dispute the crown with Richard the Third, and which it is singular affected the English, and no other people whatever.

F.—One of the most extraordinary effects of this great plague was the fate of East Greenland, a country dependant on Denmark, and at this time in a flourishing condition. The passage was always considered dangerous, and every seaman who was acquainted with it being cut off by the disease, the colony was lost;^b and so continued till it was rediscovered by Sir Martin Frobisher, in 1578, who found it in a most uncivilized condition.

A.—Though the physicians could prescribe no cure and assign no cause for this calamity, the divines had made the discovery that it was brought upon the nation by the general profligacy of manners, and chiefly by extravagance in dress, with which really, one would suppose, the wrath of heaven could have but little to

^a Stow, *Annals*.

^b Egede, *Hist. of Greenland*, chap. 2. Mallet, *Northern Antiq.*

do: the clergy inveighed with vehemence against the silk hoods, party-coloured coats, deep sleeves, and confined waists of the men; the bushy beard before, the tail of hair behind, and the enormous length of the pointed shoes;—these indeed were an ancient grievance, having been invented so long ago as the age of William Rufus, and had prevailed for three centuries; the clergy remonstrated, and even preached against them, in vain; and had they not ceased their exhortations, this preposterous fashion would probably have continued the mode to the present hour.

F.—There can be no doubt that the fashions of the age were extremely ridiculous, and far exceeded in extravagance and expense any thing in modern times. In the preceding reign, the Scots under Robert Bruce thus characterized their southern neighbours :

Long beards, heartless ;
Painted hoods, witless ;
Gay coats, graceless ;
Make England, thriftless.*

In the general anathema from the pulpit, the female world could not hope to escape; a lady is described as having her head covered with a mitre of enormous height, from the summit of which ribbons floated in the air like streamers from the top of a mast: thus attired, she rode in company with her knight to jousts and tournaments, partook of the different diversions of the men, and by her levity afforded food for scandal.^b

A.—During the prevalence of the plague (1350,) died Philip de Valois, king of France, a prince deficient neither in talents nor virtues, but his star was eclipsed by the superior orb of Edward's. Like most unfortunate princes, he became unpopular before his death; but the

* Camden, Remains.

^b Knyghton.

miseries of the reign of his son John caused the French nation to regret even the calamitous times of Philip. The truce between England and France, which had been ill observed, had now expired; and the most dangerous factions having arisen in the latter kingdom, inspired Edward with fresh hopes of renewing the war with success: with this intention he entered France at the head of a numerous army, from Calais,^a and ravaged the country with the most pitiless hostility; for the same purpose the Prince of Wales was sent to Bourdeaux.^b The attack of the king was attended with no remarkable effect, but the result of the expedition of the Black Prince is one of the most memorable events in the English history.

P.—The battle of Poitiers, an almost incredible instance of the power of discipline.

A.—The Black Prince overran the provinces adjacent to Guienne with an army of twelve thousand men, about a third of whom were English, and had ravaged in seven weeks five hundred cities, towns, and villages.^c It appears, that his design was to penetrate into Normandy, and join the king; but finding the bridges on the Loire broken down, he was obliged to think of returning to Bourdeaux, especially as he learned that John, the king of France, was approaching with a considerable army to intercept his retreat. The prince, sensible that a battle was now become unavoidable, chose his station with great judgment; it was on a rising ground, on the plain of Maupertuis, two leagues from Poitiers, surrounded with woods, vineyards, hedges, and ditches, and accessible only by one narrow defile in front.^d

F.—The situation of both parties so nearly resem-

^a Walsingham.

^b Froissart.

^c Avesbury.

^d Froissart.

bled the state of affairs at Crecy, that one would imagine common sense would have suggested to John an endeavour to avoid the error which his predecessor had committed, as, by intercepting all provisions, the English army must have surrendered without a blow.

A.—Even had this idea suggested itself, the want of discipline in the French army would have prevented the king from putting it into execution. A negotiation however took place, through the medium of the Cardinal de Perigord: Edward, the Black Prince, offered to purchase a retreat, by surrendering all the prisoners and booty acquired in the campaign, with a promise not to serve against France for seven years; but John would hear of no other terms than the surrender of the prince and his whole army without conditions. Edward gave his final answer, that England should never have to pay his ransom unless he were taken prisoner sword in hand; * this determination precluding all hope of accommodation, on the next day (19th September, 1356,) the battle took place; but though it was better fought by the French than that of Crecy, the result was nearly similar, the total rout and dispersion of their army by a force six times its inferior. Two divisions of the French, in which were the Dauphin and his two elder brothers, being repulsed, precipitately fled; but the king himself, with his younger son by his side, a youth of fourteen, fought valiantly, and endeavoured to retrieve the disaster by strenuously continuing the contest, but in vain. Left almost alone in the field, John might easily have been slain, had not every one been desirous of taking alive the royal prisoner. The king, unwilling to surrender himself to a person of inferior condition, still cried out, "Where is my cousin, the Prince of Wales?"

* Froissart.

At length giving his right hand gauntlet to Denys de Morbecque, a knight of Arras, who had been expelled from France for a homicide, committed in an affray, he said, "Sir knight, I surrender."^a

F.—In this unexampled success, the moderation and humanity of the Prince of Wales have always been the theme of unbounded praise, by the historians of both nations.

A.—Edward was reposing in his tent after the fatigue of the battle, when he was informed of the fate of the French monarch; he came forth to meet the royal captive with every mark of regard and sympathy; he paid a just tribute to his valour, and ascribed the victory to the blind chance of war, or to a superior Providence, which controls the efforts of human prudence. In Froissart's frivolous gossip, the principal circumstance which attracts his admiration, in which indeed he is followed by Hume, is the prince's declining to sit down to supper with the French king, in spite of all entreaty, saying, that it became him not to seat himself at the table of so great a monarch and so valiant a man.

P.—If the courteousness of the Prince of Wales had not been established beyond all possible controversy, I am inclined to suspect that John would have been apt to feel this refusal as a refined mockery, especially as at the same table were placed his own son and some of the captive nobility.^b

A.—A story is related by the same author, highly creditable to the generosity of the parties concerned. Lord Audley having been grievously wounded, was brought to the Black Prince in a litter, who, stooping down, embraced the warrior, and with due commendations for his services, ordered him a grant of four hun-

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

dred marks yearly revenue. Lord Audley returning to his tent, as frankly divided the gift amongst his ~~four~~ esquires that attended him in the battle. This circumstance reaching the ear of the prince, he began to apprehend that his present was contemned as too trivial; but Lord Audley satisfied him with this answer: "I must reward those who have so well deserved my favour; these my esquires saved my life amidst the enemy; and God be thanked, I have sufficient revenue left by my ancestors to maintain me in your service."

P.—A vulgar mind would have felt displeased at such an appropriation of the gift.

A.—But the prince commending Lord Audley's prudence and liberality, confirmed his donation to the esquires, and assigned to the baron a fresh portion of land in England, to the yearly value of six hundred marks.^a And now he was presently to exhibit the highest treat which I suppose the English public ever enjoyed, the sight of a king of France led captive through the streets of London. The Prince of Wales conducted his prisoner to Bourdeaux, and thence to Dover. He was received in the metropolis by the mayor, Henry Picard, and one thousand citizens, richly attired and nobly mounted. The French king, in splendid robes, was seated on a beautiful white charger, which, be it known, according to chivalric allegory, is significant of royalty; whilst the Prince of Wales, in a plain dress, rode by his side on a black palfrey. When the procession reached Westminster Hall, King Edward, who was seated on a magnificent throne, descended as soon as the captive monarch appeared, advanced to meet him, and embraced the royal stranger with every mark of cordial esteem.^b

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

P.—This exhibition of a captive to the gaze of the populace, though perfectly in unison with the spirit of the times, perhaps does not quite accord with the delicacy of a more refined age.

A.—The French monarch was lodged in the palace of the Savoy, and was treated with indulgence and with every mark of respect. He had the melancholy consolation of meeting a companion in affliction, David Bruce, king of Scots, who had suffered a captivity of eleven years; but who was shortly after released by Edward, (1357) the price of his ransom being one hundred thousand marks;^a his former competitor, Edward Baliol, having resigned into Edward's hands his pretensions to the crown of Scotland for an annual pension of two thousand marks,^b had passed into France, where he lived and died contented, in a private station.^c

F.—The rivalry of these families, which had inflicted so much misery on Scotland, was thus for ever happily terminated.

A.—Unfortunate France, in the absence of her king, suffered every species of calamity: different competitors for the crown; a factious nobility; a divided and rebellious people, who shook off all the restraints of government, and pillaged the kingdom at their pleasure. Edward, hoping to take advantage of these disorders, ravaged the northern provinces with impunity, arriving even at the gates of Paris. His great desire was to be crowned King of France at Rheims, which city he in vain besieged. At length finding his object at as great a distance as ever, and embarrassed by his multiplied expenses, he seized an opportunity to extricate himself without impairing his honour. As his army lay encamped near Chartres, the cold became excessive, and

^a Rymer, vol. 6.

^b Rymer, vol. 5.

^c Knyghton.

a sudden and dreadful storm arose, which is said to have destroyed six thousand horses and one thousand of his men, the hailstones being of extraordinary dimensions. This incident was esteemed by the army as a sign of God's wrath, and the king affected to be of the same opinion, for turning his face towards Chartres, he fell on his knees, and made a vow that he would consent to an equitable peace.*

F.—This equitable peace was tolerably advantageous to Edward: the French king was to pay three millions of gold crowns for his ransom; and Edward was to resign all pretensions to the crown of France, which, as he had now sufficient experience that he had no chance of obtaining, was selling a chimerical claim at a high price; he was also to receive, with Calais, certain provinces in the south of France, which, as well as Guienne, were not to be encumbered by the feudal homage. This is called the peace of Bretigni (1360).†

A.—The two kings took a cordial leave of each other, with many professions (probably sincere) of reciprocal esteem.‡ The ceded provinces were conferred on the Prince of Wales; but the inhabitants expressing their unwillingness to submit to the domination of the English, by partial insurrections, John took the extraordinary resolution of returning to London, for the purpose of adjusting these differences. Being dissuaded by his council from executing so rash a design, he made that memorable reply which ought to eternize his memory: "That if honour and good faith were banished from the rest of the world, they should still be found in the breast of princes."§

P.—Those who delight in disparaging human nature have asserted, that John having become enamoured

* Froissart.

† Rymer, vol. 6.

‡ Froissart.

§ Mezerai.

of an English lady, was glad to find a pretence for paying her a visit.

F.—If such a motive had existed, we may be certain that it would not have escaped the enquiries of Froissart.

A.—The French king was again lodged in the palace of the Savoy, where he soon after sickened and died (1364).^a John was a prince of eminent valour, goodness, and honour, but a singular example of the persecution of fortune. Under his government France suffered an overwhelming weight of calamities, from which at length she was gradually relieved by the consummate prudence of his son Charles the Fifth, the first prince of France that had assumed the title of Dauphin. The earliest measure of the new king was to get rid of a numerous banditti which infested his kingdom, under the name of the Companies.^b These persons were military adventurers, who had fought on both sides, and who could not forsake their old habits of pillage; Charles wanted them to undertake a crusade, but for this pious labour they had too much cunning and too little religion.

P.—In what way do the Companies connect themselves with the affairs of England?

A.—You shall presently hear. Pedro the Cruel, king of Castile, deservedly meriting that title for his atrocious barbarity, had incurred the general hatred of his subjects, many of his nobility having fallen victims to his injustice. Henry, count of Transtamare, his natural brother, took up arms in defence of the common rights of the nation; but failing in his attempt, he was compelled to seek refuge in France, where, seeing the advantage to be obtained from the assistance of the

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

Companies, he sought to enlist them in his service. Thus raising a considerable army, Henry returned and dethroned Pedro, and was chosen King of Castile in his room. In this extremity the legitimate tyrant resorted to the compassion of the Prince of Wales, now residing at Bourdeaux, who in an evil hour promised his assistance. An army was speedily equipped, with which Edward crossed the Pyrenees, accompanied by his brother, John of Gaunt; and the immediate consequence was the desertion of the Companies from Henry of Transtamare to the service of the English prince.*

P.—So great then was the influence of Edward's name and reputation.

A.—Yet Henry, beloved by his new subjects and supported by his ally the King of Arragon, mustered an army of seventy thousand men, a force far exceeding his adversary in number. He was advised by his most experienced generals not to hazard any decisive action, but to cut off the enemy's supplies: this prudent precaution was neglected, and the armies met on the banks of the Ebro, near the town of Najara. The prayer which Froissart puts into the mouth of the Black Prince, just before the battle, if it cannot be depended on as absolutely authentic, is yet sufficiently characteristic: with eyes uplifted towards heaven, he thus spake: "God of truth, the father of Jesus Christ, who hast made and fashioned me, condescend, through thy benign grace, that the success of this battle and this day may be for me and for my army; for thou knowest that in truth I have been solely emboldened to undertake it in the support of justice and reason, to reinstate this king upon his throne;" then taking Pedro, who stood at his side, by the hand, he added, "Sir king,

* Froissart.

you shall know this day whether you will have any thing in the kingdom of Castile or not;" and he then cried out, "Advance banners, in the name of God and St. George."^a A more signal victory was never obtained. Henry was chased off the field, with the loss of twenty thousand men, whilst there fell on the side of the English only four knights and forty private soldiers (3d April, 1367).^b Castile submitted to the conqueror, and Pedro was replaced upon the throne. The tyrant would have murdered all his prisoners in cold blood, had he not been prevented by the remonstrances of Edward; and, in perfect conformity with his character, he basely refused the stipulated payment to the English forces. The Black Prince soon finding his army perishing by sickness, and his own constitution undermined from the insalubrity of the climate, returned in a state of great dissatisfaction to Guienne.^c

P.—Though these affairs relate personally to the Prince of Wales, I do not see their connection with English history.

A.—Another link of the chain will reach the point. The expenses incurred by this undertaking having involved the Prince of Wales in great embarrassment, he was compelled to levy taxes on his newly-acquired provinces, which the people resenting, carried their complaints to the King of France, as their liege lord, who shutting his eyes against the provisions of the treaty of Bretigni, by which his father renounced all claim of homage and fealty for Guienne and the ceded provinces, boldly summoned Prince Edward to appear before a court of his peers at Paris, to be judged as a rebellious vassal; the Prince replied, that he would

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

^c Walsingham.

come indeed, but it should be with a helmet on his head, and with an army of sixty thousand men; a threat which his declining health permitted him not to execute.

P.—The Black Prince having engaged in Pedro's affairs, with which he had evidently no business, we do not very much sympathise with his disappointment.

A.—Though Pedro was a profligate tyrant, he was nevertheless a legitimate sovereign; a sufficient excuse in that age, and indeed in some others, for affording him support: he was however ultimately defeated and slain by his brother Henry, who, though a bastard, transmitted the crown of Castile to his posterity. The French king, in addition to the insult offered to the Black Prince, refused to pay what was still due of his father's ransom; thinking it more to the purpose to expel his foes with iron than to assist them with gold.

F.—Such had been the extreme and unprovoked injuries which the English had exercised against France, that politicians, if not moralists, will extenuate the conduct of Charles on this occasion.

A.—Edward, exceedingly incensed, again renewed hostilities, and reassumed the vain title of King of France. But, behold the fortune of war! The Black Prince being compelled to return on account of his illness, all the possessions, acquired with the waste of so much blood and treasure, gradually slipped away from the grasp of the conqueror; and though many expensive expeditions were fitted out for their recovery, not one succeeded, chiefly from the talents and exertions of Bertrand du Guesclin, who now commanded the French armies, and who seems to have been the first consummate general which had yet appeared in

Europe. Thus not only all Edward's new conquests, except Calais, but all his ancient possessions in France, except Bayonne and Bourdeaux, were wrested from his hands.*

F.—The remainder of Edward's reign was like an insipid fifth act of a lively and bustling drama, in which the catastrophe ill accords with the expectations excited at the beginning: with the loss of his provinces abroad, Edward felt the decay of authority at home, and experienced how great is the influence of present fortune upon the judgment of the people.

P.—Yet, in justification of the people, we may safely conclude, that nothing but success could have biassed the understanding in favour of Edward's ruinous and unreasonable claim. But what said the parliament to these disasters? of whose voice amidst the din of arms and conquest we have lately heard but little.

A.—In no reign were parliaments more frequently assembled, the exigencies of the monarch standing in need of continual supplies, in return for which he consented to the enactment of some salutary laws: during the reign of Edward, no fewer than seventy parliaments¹ were summoned; but sometimes he called together only a great council. The separation of the knights of the shire from the barons, and their permanent union with the burgesses (1343,) is a remarkable epoch; the constitution beginning evidently to assume a well-defined model of that mixed form of government which it has since maintained.

F.—This united body of the Commons originally assembled in the chapter-house of Westminster. The present chapel of St. Stephen's was built by Edward the Third, as an adjunct to his palace; and he esta-

* Walsingham. Froissart.

¹ Dugdale, Summons to Parl.

blished a collegiate body, which being dissolved at the reformation, the building was then appropriated and has ever since continued the place of sitting of the House of Commons.*

A.—The Parliament of 1351 acquired the appellation of ‘blessed,’^b for passing the statute defining and limiting the crime of treason to the three heads of conspiring the death of the king, levying war against him, and adhering to his enemies; which heads it would have been as well had they never been increased.

F.—Who would not suppose that a law of such immense importance would appear as a conspicuous landmark in the statute book; instead of which it is inserted merely as a clause in the statute of provisors,^c regulating the intercourse of the clergy with the see of Rome.

A.—A second statute of provisors,^d equally just and popular, was passed, which rendered it penal to procure any presentation of ecclesiastical benefices from the court of Rome, or to carry any cause by appeal to that tribunal: the punishment for such offences, though it was often evaded, was subsequently called a *præmunire*, from a barbarous corruption of *præmoneri*, ‘to admonish,’ the chief word in the writ; and it was exceedingly severe, extending to the loss of goods and lands, and to perpetual imprisonment. The parliament at this period was excessively angry with the papal power, and asserted that the usurpations of the Pope were the cause of all the plagues, famine, injury, and poverty of the kingdom;^e and it supported Edward to resist all further claim from Rome, on account of the

* Stow, Survey.

^d 27 Edw. III.

^b Coke, Inst. 3.

^c Cotton's Abridgment.

^e 25 Edw. III.

tribute to which King John had so ignominiously subjected the kingdom.

F.—These were acts of the two houses of parliament: but the Commons having acquired a marked and separate importance at the end of this reign, chose their first speaker, Sir Thomas Hungerford. There is indeed an opinion afloat, that Sir Peter de la Mare was the first speaker, and that he was not chosen till the first parliament of Richard the Second; but the record expressly mentions, “*Monsieur Thomas de Hungerford, qui avoit les paroles par les Communes d’Angleterre en c’est parlement*” (1377).^a

A.—The lower house gave an early symptom of its nascent power: for becoming extremely discontented with the grievous impositions and expense occasioned by the French wars, the inutility of which was now sufficiently manifest, it impeached Lord Latimer,^b the chamberlain, on the ground of embezzling the revenue; and what must have been felt as more mortifying to so haughty a spirit as Edward’s, the Commons presumed to censure his domestic conduct. At the death of Queen Philippa (1369), who appears to have been an exemplary princess,^c and every way worthy of the long happiness which she enjoyed, this monarch, in the decline of life, began to indulge in a course of pleasure entirely inconsistent with his former character: Alice Peres,^d or Perrers,^e a married lady attendant on the late queen, having by her beauty and address acquired a complete ascendancy over him, carried her effrontery to such an extent as to sit on the bench and dictate to the judges.^f Her avarice was unbounded, and the king thought only of procuring her diversions and pleasure: at a tournament held in her honour at Smithfield, she appeared by

^a Rot. Parl. 51 Edw. III.

^d Walsingham.

^b Cotton’s Abridg.

^e Rot. Parl. 1 Rich. II.

^c Walsingham.

^f Walsingham.

his side, as the lady of the sun, in a triumphal chariot, attended by many ladies of quality, each leading a knight by his horse's bridle.*

P.— In life's last scenes what prodigies surprise !

Who could recognize the conqueror of Crecy in this picture of an infatuated dotard ?

A.—The remonstrances of parliament were urged with such effect, that Mistress Alice was for the present cashiered from court,^b which soon, as well as the nation, became overspread with the utmost melancholy, on account of the death of the Prince of Wales (June 8, 1376), in the forty-sixth year of his age,^c from a lingering decline, the foundation of which was laid in his Spanish campaign. Edward's person is not described by contemporary writers ; but his character has ever been the theme of veneration.

F.—An effigy of gilt copper of the Black Prince remains on his tomb at Canterbury, from which an engraving was made by Vertue, and Edward appears as a fine martial figure. There is also an ancient picture, which Mr. Walpole^d thought contemporaneous. It originally came from Betchworth Castle, and is now in the possession of the Onslow family : it represents the prince in black armour, embossed with gold ; he wears a hat with a white feather, but seems pale and emaciated with sickness.*

A.—The Black Prince is the hero, beyond all others, after Alfred, at least of royal birth, whom the English people hold in most esteem ; brave, without fierceness, modest and affable, ever respectful to his father, whom he never once disobliged, generous, liberal, pleased

* Stow, Sturvey.

Anecd. of Painting.

^b Walsingham.

^c Antiq. Repert. vol. 3.

^d Ibid.

with rewarding merit wherever he found it, he wanted no quality to dignify and adorn the most exalted station, not only in that semi-barbarous age, but in the most shining period of ancient or modern history.

F.—If it be supposed that the precepts and principles of chivalry had any thing to do with the formation of so perfect a character, you have unwittingly passed upon the institution a most splendid panegyric.

A.—It must be owned that the virtues of chivalry were somewhat capriciously exercised. Edward particularly resenting the defection of the town of Limoges from the English sway, delivered it up to plunder and slaughter, resisting with the completest apathy the tears, cries, and despairing agonies of the women and children, who fell at his feet for mercy; but after the slaughter of three thousand persons, by chance discerning three French knights who had stopped the progress of his soldiers by incredible efforts, he became so moved with the sight of their bravery, that he gave immediate orders to cease the carnage.^a

P.—Perhaps this incident ought to be considered as a scene got up for the occasion by Froissart, like the story of the burgesses of Calais.

A.—The death of the Prince of Wales was taken so bitterly to heart by the old king, that it was supposed to shorten his days.^b The Captal de Buche, also a renowned warrior, and companion in arms to the prince, was so overwhelmed with grief that he refused all nourishment, and speedily followed his beloved master to the grave.

P.—What is the meaning of that strange appellation, the Captal de Buche?

F.—Buche is a castle in Aquitaine, the lord of

^a Froissart.

^b Polydore Vergil.

which affected the title of captal, from *capitalis*, as of somewhat higher rank than a count.

A.—Edward, feeling the decline of his strength, and fearful of leaving his successor Richard, son to the Black Prince, now of the age of ten years, involved in the war, desired to obtain terms of peace with France, but had the mortification of being refused.^a Worn out with anxiety, this “mighty victor, mighty lord,” expired at Shene,^b in Surrey, in the 65th year of his age, June 21, 1377.

P.— Low on the funeral couch he lies;
 No pitying heart, no eye afford
 A tear to grace his obsequies.

A.—This observation of the poet was occasioned by the shameful desertion of the monarch in his last moments. Being intrusted to the care of Alice Peres, that Jezebel, on the morning of his dissolution, drew the rings from his fingers and departed from the palace. A priest approaching the chamber, found Edward yet sensible, but speechless, when presenting to him a crucifix, the dying king kissed the sacred emblem, wept, and expired.^c

F.—The first forty years of Edward’s reign were a rare example of human felicity, as well in domestic as in public life; but its latter part was peculiarly clouded with the infirmities and weaknesses of age: nor did fortune, as with Augustus, remain till the close.

A.—Valiant and munificent, of a majestic presence, tall, strong, and active, of an engaging address and agreeable countenance,^d Edward commanded the respect as well as secured the affections of his subjects. In the leading features of his character he much resembled

^a Froissart.

^b Rymer, vol. 7.

^c Walsingham.

^d Ibid.

his grandfather, Edward the First, without perhaps possessing quite the same solidity of judgment. His wars in France, purely the result of ambition, were the actions of his life which most deserved blame; but from the indulgence usually shewn to conquerors, have most contributed to his renown: they were not only unjust, but unprofitable; their success above all things was that which the English nation had most cause to deprecate.

F.—The nation does not appear to have increased in wealth during this long reign: at its beginning, the commerce of the kingdom with the French provinces, Guienne and Gascony, was so considerable, that two hundred English ships were sometimes seen together in the harbour of Bourdeaux;^a but before its conclusion, frequent complaints were made of the decay of shipping, which to remedy, an act was passed in 1381, that merchants should freight none but English vessels, under the penalty of forfeiting all the goods so embarked; but it was soon found that this act could not be executed without diminishing trade, and consequently the next year allowance was granted for merchants to freight foreign vessels when they could not procure English.

A.—This statute, 5 Richard II. c. 3, seems to be the first navigation act passed in England; but its speedy repeal proves that it was an inadequate remedy to the grievance complained of.

F.—Judge Blackstone calls it a wise provision; but how it could be wise, or equitable, or useful, to prohibit all foreign ships from entering English ports, or if they came, to refuse freighting them, I am at a loss to comprehend; and therefore I set this opinion down

^a Barnes, Hist. Edw. III.

amongst the numerous anilities of the celebrated commentator.

A.—To Edward the English are indebted for the introduction of the woollen manufactory, though with much contention and opposition of his subjects; for observing the prodigious wealth and power of the towns in Flanders from their extensive trade, he encouraged foreign artificers, who had no stock but great skill, to settle in England; and several manufactories in various places were thus established.*

P.—That of Norwich particularly, the patron saint of which was Bishop Blaise, though who he was I am totally ignorant.

F.—Blaise is supposed to have been a bishop of Sebasta, in Cappadocia, and to have suffered martyrdom under the persecution of Diocletian: before he was beheaded, his flesh was torn from his bones by iron combs, which circumstance alone has made him the allegorical patron of the woolcombers. Having once relieved a boy that had a fish bone stuck in his throat, he was also much invoked for the cure of the quinsy.^b

A.—From a remarkable record in the Exchequer, which has been often published,^c we are informed that the amount of the exports of the kingdom in 1354 was 294,184 pounds, and the imports 38,970: the exports consisted almost entirely of the four staple commodities of the kingdom, wool, leather, lead, and tin; the imports were chiefly fine cloth, linens, wine, and groceries. But notwithstanding this great balance, the nation heavily complained of the general poverty; for which it is difficult to account, unless we suppose that a large part of the commodities exported were extorted from the owners, for the service of the king.

* Rymer, vol. 4.

^b Dr. Pegge, *Gent. Mag.*

^c Anderson, *Hist. of Commerce*, vol. 1.

F.—That Edward, notwithstanding the restrictive statutes, made an arbitrary use of his prerogative, is apparent, from various remonstrances of parliament during the whole of his reign.

A.—Yet Sir Matthew Hale represents the law as receiving great improvements under Edward's government: "The pleadings," says he, "having neither uncertainty, prolixity, or obscurity."

P.—*Eheu quantum mutatus!*

F.—But however excellent might be the state of the law, the police of the kingdom was miserable: the King of Cyprus* was at one time robbed and stripped on the highway, with all his retinue; and at another time two cardinals shared the same fate.

A.—The attention of the great men being turned from domestic faction to foreign war, left the kingdom in a state of internal tranquillity; and this was the sole advantage which it derived from Edward's ambition, unless indeed, by having plunged him in debt, it rendered him more dependent on parliament, which wrested from his necessities the abolition or regulation of several feudal grievances. To a lover of constitutional antiquities, therefore, no period of ancient English history is better worth studying, as he will see the Commons, by gradual advances, securing their importance in the state. The validity of the great charter became now universally acknowledged, which bound the kingly authority within some limits; and though the powers of each branch of the government were inaccurately known and irregularly exercised, yet we may clearly trace the budding of that early scion, which has since so nobly expanded into a glorious tree of constitutional freedom.

* Walsingham.

DISSERTATION IX.

SECTION III.

RICHARD II. - - - A. D. 1377.

F.—NOTHING is more striking in the early history of England, than the extreme contrast so often presented in contiguous reigns. What can be more dissimilar to the sunshine of the days of Edward the Third, than the clouds and tempests which darkened the horizon of his unhappy grandson :

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim, the gilded vessel goes,
Youth on the prow, and pleasure at the helm ;
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That, hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

A.—We have another illustration of the misfortunes of this monarch from the pen of honest John Stow, which, if not so poetical as Mr. Gray's, contains a very true explanation of their origin :

The foolish council of the lewd
And young he did receive ;
And grave advice of aged heads
He did reject and leave.

Richard acceded to the crown in his eleventh year ; his coronation was performed with extraordinary ceremony, expense, and magnificence.

F.—On this occasion we first find mention of a champion,* who was Sir John Dymock ; but the office is certainly of an older date, the manor of Scrivelsby, in Lincolnshire, having been held by the family of Mar-

* Walsingham.

mion, whose heiress Sir John had married, on the service of officiating as champion of England at the coronation.^a We are also told that the lord steward, marshal, and constable, rode up and down Westminster Hall on their chargers, to preserve order.^b

P.—So mere a boy as Richard could not of course pretend to direct the reins of power.

A.—As the late king had left no plan of government during the minority of his grandson, it became necessary for parliament to supply this defect; and the house of commons interfered on this occasion, by petitioning the lords to choose a council of regency;^c a remarkable proof of the importance which that house had now acquired in the constitution. Nine persons of distinction were accordingly chosen; and the authority of the king's three uncles repressed for a while the turbulence of the nobility, which a weak reign was sure to engender.

F.—These three princes were themselves supposed to entertain ambitious designs, though at this period perhaps unjustly. John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, was unpopular, of haughty manners, and not of a very enterprising disposition; Edmund of Langley, duke of York, was of slender capacity, indolent, and easy; Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, was bold, turbulent, and designing, but being the youngest of the family he had less authority.

A.—The government was thus carried on in tolerable tranquillity, but the situation of England was far from favourable: the useless, if not pernicious, nature of Edward's French conquests was now become apparent; the nation was involved in a burdensome war, which could answer no beneficial purpose; and in order to furnish the expenses of various armaments and expedi-

^a Camden.

^b Walsingham.

^c Parl. Hist. vol. 1.

tions, which ended in nothing, parliament imposed (in 1379) a sort of property-tax, in proportion to the rank and wealth of the different classes of the community: a duke was rated at six pounds thirteen shillings and fourpence; an earl at four pounds; barons and knights, two pounds; esquires, one pound; a judge, five pounds; sergeants, two pounds; mayor of London, four pounds; aldermen, two pounds; merchants, thirteen shillings and fourpence; smaller tradesmen, from six shillings and eightpence to sixpence.^a This tax being equitable was not complained of; but though productive it was inefficient for the supply required; and the next year parliament imposed a poll-tax of three groats on every person above fifteen years of age,^b a sum more than equivalent to a guinea of the present day. The injustice of which imposition, though it was directed that the opulent should relieve the more indigent, is apparent; and it produced the most remarkable and extensive insurrection ever known in England.

F.—Some successful recent examples of the peasantry, both in France and Flanders,^c rising against their oppressors, tended much to increase the prevailing ferment.

A.—The tenure by villenage was felt in England as a heavy grievance; and the soldiers who had retired from the French wars, could ill brook the condition of bondsmen to their former lords. This insurrection seems first to have begun at the village of Fobbing, near Brentwood, in Essex, where the mob broke into a priory, drank up three tuns of wine, and devoured all the victuals.^d The discontent extending itself to the neighbouring counties, an incident presently occurred at Dartford, in Kent, which led to a regular organization of the insurgents. A collector of the tax entering the

^a Plac. Parl. vol. 3. ^b Walsingham. ^c Froissart. ^d Stow, Annals.

house of a tiler, indecently seized his daughter, whom her mother asserted to be below the age assigned; and such brutality, it seems, was common.^a The people being inflamed at the conduct of this ruffian, the commotion reached the ears of the father, who was at his work tiling a house; when catching his "lathing-staff in his hand, he ran reeking home; and being informed of the insult, he smote the collector with such violence, that his brains flew out of his head."^b The neighbours applauding the deed, exclaimed that it was time to take vengeance on their tyrants, and they immediately flew to arms (1381). A hundred thousand men speedily collected on Blackheath, under the guidance of leaders, who assumed the names of Wat Tyler, Jack Straw, Jack Shepherd, Hob Carter, Tom Miller, and their appearance became extremely formidable.

F.—An enumeration of the leaders in a Latin poem by Gower, their contemporary, in his "*Vox Clamantis*," does not rival in dignity the catalogue of Homer or Virgil's heroes:

Watte vocat, cum Thomæ venit, neque Symme retardat,
 Batteque, Gibbeque, simul Hykke venire jubent;
 Colle furit, quem Bobbe juvat, nocumenta parantes,
 Cum quibus ad damnum, Wille coire vovit.

Wat cries, Tom flies, nor Symkin steps aside,
 And Bat, and Gib, and Hyke they summon loud;
 Colin and Bob combustibles provide,
 And Will destruction threatens to the crowd.

A.—A seditious priest, John Ball, who was inviously said to be tainted with Wickliffe's heresies,^c but who was rather the precursor^d than the follower of that reformer, preached to the assembled multitude from the well-known distich,

When Adam dived and Eve span,
 Who was then the gentleman? *

^a Knyghton.

^b Stow, from the *Liber St. Alban.*

^c Walsingham.

^d Knyghton. * Walsingham.

In his sermon he descanted on the natural equality of mankind, the tyranny of artificial distinctions, and on other topics well calculated to inflame the discontented audience. At this juncture the Princess of Wales appeared with her retinue, on her return from a pilgrimage to Canterbury; she happily eluded insult by her address; and a few kisses,^a forced from the once Fair Maid of Kent, secured her the protection of the leaders. The insurgents now sent a message to the king, by Sir John Newton, a knight whom they had taken prisoner, and a conference was appointed; but on the next day, as Richard approached in his barge to Rotherhithe, they set up, says Froissart, such shouts and cries as if all the devils in hell had been in their company, which so frightened the courtiers, particularly Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, that he persuaded Richard not to trust himself with such unshod ribalds,^b but to return immediately to the tower. The seditious peasants, proceeding to the metropolis, entered the city over the bridge: at first they conducted themselves with order, but in a few days committed the most horrible excesses.

F.—Popular licence in all ages is nearly the same; but some particulars depict the manners of the times: every man whom the insurgents met they asked, "With whom holdest thou?" and unless he gave the proper answer, "With King Richard and the Commons," they struck off his head.^c The mob had a peculiar enmity to the Flemings,^d whom they compelled, as a test of their country, to pronounce the words "bread and cheese," which if they at all deviated into 'brot,' or 'cawse,'^e they were instantly put to death.

^a Froissart.

^b Discaligatos ribaldos. Walsingham.

^c Stow.

^d Knyghton.

^e Stow.

P.—These delicate purists remind us of the Attic herbwoman, who detected Theophrastus for a stranger by his dialect.

A.—The insurgents bore a great dislike to the Duke of Lancaster, to whom they attributed the imposition of the poll-tax; they first plundered and then burned his palace in the Savoy, at that time the most magnificent dwelling in the kingdom. A very horrible anecdote is related, that thirty-two of the mob, having got into the cellar where the sweet wines lay, drank so much that they were not able to find their way out, and the falling stones and burning wood afterward impeding their regress, they were heard for several days together, by many persons, shouting and crying, but none went to their relief, and they all finally perished.^a The Tower now became the chief object of attention, and the king held a council in that fortress, at which it was agreed that he should meet the insurgents on Mile End Green and hear their complaints.^b

F.—Their complaints were no doubt reasonable enough, had they been urged in a reasonable manner.

A.—They demanded the abolition of tenure by villenage, the reduction of rents, free liberty of buying and selling in fairs and markets, with a pardon for past offences: with these requests the king complied and signed a charter to that effect: this party of the insurgents then dispersed, satisfied with these conditions;^c but Wat Tyler and Jack Straw had more ambitious designs. During the absence of the king another body of the rebels broke into the Tower, ransacked every part of it, notwithstanding it contained a garrison of six hundred men, drove out the king's mother, and murdered Sir Robert Hales, the chancellor, and Simon

^a Knyghton.

^b Froissart.

^c Ibid.

Sedbury, the primate, a prelate of virtue and munificence, but whom the insurgents hated for his advising Richard not to trust himself in their hands at Blackheath.* The next day the king himself, passing through Smithfield very slenderly guarded, was met by Wat Tyler at the head of these rioters: the celebrated conference which took place has been variously related; the more probable account is, that Tyler, in a conversation with the king, approached so near the royal person as to lay his hand on the king's bridle, and by the motion of his dagger^b gave so much alarm to William Walworth, the lord mayor of London, that he plunged his sword into the rebel's throat: Tyler, spurring his horse, rode about a dozen yards, and falling to the ground, was despatched by one of the king's attendants.^c

F.—This was surely a most imprudent action, to call it by the mildest appellation, which, though it has been memorized by the addition of the dagger to the arms of the city of London, exposed the whole party to the danger of instant destruction.

A.—Which in all probability they would not have escaped, had it not been for the singular presence of mind in Richard, who, seeing the irritated countenances of the rebels, and that their bows were bent, galloping up to them, exclaimed, "What are ye doing, my men? Tyler was a traitor: come with me, and I will be your leader!"^d The rioters followed him to the open fields, where they were met by a veteran force; but Richard with great humanity prevented his soldiers from offering them any injury, and they were dismissed with the same promises and charters as had been granted to their fellows on Mile End Green;^e and

* Walsingham. ^b Knyghton. ^c Ibid. ^d Walsingham. ^e Froissart.

thus ended this formidable insurrection, which at one period threatened absolute destruction to the government, as the rebels meant, it was pretended, to murder all the nobility, and gentry, and lawyers, in the land.^a

F.—Though the conditions of reconciliation were shamefully eluded by revoking the charters,^b in justice to the young king be it observed, that it was his intention to fulfil his promise, but parliament would not consent to the manumission of the tenants from the yoke of villenage.^c We may judge of the liberality of these high-minded nobles, from their absolutely petitioning Richard, on a subsequent occasion, that no villain should be permitted to send his son to school,^d with which liberal request the king declined complying.

P.—You give the appellation of *Lord Mayor* to William Walworth, which title, as it occurs for the first time, I suppose was recently bestowed.

F.—The time or the occasion when the chief magistrate of the city of London received this important addition to his dignity, most strange to say, is not mentioned in any charter, nor recorded by any historian. In the year 1354 the city sergeants, by a charter, yet extant, from Edward the Third, were permitted to carry maces of gold or silver before the mayor.^e This is peculiar to the city of London, a royal precept having expressly commanded all other corporations not to use maces of any other metal than copper;^f it is probable therefore that at that period (1354,) the title of Lord Mayor was first conferred.

A.—The remains of the insurrection, particularly Norfolk, were put down by Henry Spencer, the martial

^a Walsingham. ^b Rymer, vol. 7. ^c Plac. Parl. 5 Rich. II.

^d Rot. Parl. 15 Rich. II. ^e Maitland, Hist. London, vol. 1.

^f Cotton's Abridg.

bishop of Norwich.* As the insurgents rose at the same time in various places, they acted probably under the direction of some acknowledged, though invisible, leaders; indeed the king's uncles themselves were far from being unsuspected. The people thus reduced to their former condition, several of the ringleaders, with a large number of the rebels, to the amount of fifteen hundred,^b were tried and executed, chiefly at the instigation of the chief justice, Sir Robert Tresilian,^c who performed his commission with the same revolting avarice as Judge Jeffries at a later period.

P.—As this magistrate's name happily rhymes to villain, it has been thus handed down by the caustic muse of Swift, who parallels it with a tyrannical judge of his own age:

A wicked monster on the bench,
Whose fury blood could never quench;
As vile and profligate a villain
As modern Scroggs or old Tresilian.

A.—The conduct of a youth like Richard, not fifteen years of age, who discovered in such a trying emergency so much presence of mind, address, and courage, excited the expectation of a reign as illustrious as the preceding; but as the king advanced in years these hopes vanished, and much want of judgment appeared in all his conduct: his education was neglected, and his ambitious uncles, pursuing their own designs, left him in the hands of young persons of frivolous character, who corrupted his mind with flattery, and inspired him with the love of empty pomp and pleasure; he became vain, voluptuous, and extravagant; a general feeling of discontent arose in the nation, which an ill-

* Walsingham.

^b Froissart.

^c Knyghton.

conducted expedition against Scotland^a tended much to increase.

P.—Both in character and situation Richard bore a considerable resemblance to the unfortunate Edward the Second.

A.—He too had also a favourite, Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, a young nobleman of much beauty of person, but of dissolute manners. The king set so little bounds to his affection as to create De Vere Marquis of Dublin (1386), a title before unknown in England, and afterwards Duke of Ireland, with the entire sovereignty for life of that kingdom.^b This profusion of honours excited the jealousy of the princes of the blood and the chief nobility, and they immediately conspired, by the aid of parliament, to produce his ruin.

F.—De Vere seems to have been of the same class of royal favourites as Gaveston and Spenser, whose handsome person formed their chief recommendation. Froissart calls him, “*un poupee*, who had seen nothing, who had learnt nothing, and who had never been in battle.”

P.—Proceeding in their impeachment by the aid of parliament, the accusers discover something of a more apparent regard to the forms of law and the constitution than the course pursued by the confederated barons against Gaveston and the Spensers.

A.—Parliament began the attack by impeaching Michael de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, the chancellor; and though the charges were extremely frivolous,^c the king was ultimately compelled to deprive him of his office, though at first Richard had the imprudence to declare that he would not, to gratify the parliament, turn out

^a Froissart.

^b Walsingham.

^c Cotton's Abridgm.

the meanest scullion from his kitchen;^a a contempt which proved extremely injurious to his interests, as, under the direction of the turbulent Gloucester, a commission of regency was appointed (1386), consisting of fourteen persons,^b who were to exercise the government, and thus for the present was the king virtually dethroned.

F.—But as Richard had not yet reached his majority, it does not appear that this commission, though dangerous, was absolutely unconstitutional or illegal.

A.—It is difficult to say what age constituted majority in the ancient kings of England, as it was a maxim in law^c that the king was never a minor, and in the case of Richard the age of his majority had not been declared by parliament. From subsequent events, it would appear that the usual period of twenty-one years was considered the standard. The disenthroned king soon found that his person was neglected and his court deserted: solitude could not but be disagreeable to a young prince fond of power, and still more fond of pomp; he accordingly took the opinion of the judges, at Nottingham, on the illegality of the commission, who, either influenced by the reason of the case, or overawed by fear, declared that it was derogatory to the royalty of the king, and that those who procured it were worthy of capital punishment.^d

F.—There is a story that one of these judges, Sir Robert Belknap, having signed a declaration, upon a threat of instant death, that the king was above the law, said to Richard, “Now I want nothing but a ship or a nimble horse to convey me away; or rather a halter to give me the reward that I deserve for this treason

^a Knyghton.

^c Blackstone, vol. 1.

^b Stat. 10 Richard II.

^d Ypod Neust. Knyghton.

against the land; yet if I had not done so, I had been killed at your hands."^a

A.—Such a story can scarcely be genuine, as the answer of the judges, who were seven in number, was given in the presence of several bishops and others of the council.^b But the Duke of Gloucester and his party, having got intelligence of the transaction, assembled forces and accused five persons concerned in the affair of high treason: the Archbishop of York, Sir Robert Tresilian, Sir Robert Brembre, the Duke of Ireland, and the Earl of Suffolk.^c The two latter escaped beyond sea, where they died a few years after in exile; Tresilian and Brembre were executed; and the prelate was saved by his sacred function alone.

F.—Though Richard continued his regard for the Duke of Ireland, he never attempted to recal him from exile. The favourite dying in 1392 at Louvaine, from a wound received whilst hunting the wild boar, the body of this new Adonis was embalmed and brought, three years after, to England: it was viewed by the king with evident marks of the highest affection, and honoured with a sumptuous funeral.^d

A.—The factious nobility in these prosecutions were regardless even of the appearance of justice, since an opinion delivered in council on the validity of a very doubtful commission could scarcely be tortured into treason. Several of the judges, with many other persons, were banished; and all this under sanction of the two houses, which the favourers of the Duke of Gloucester called the wonder-working, and his enemies the merciless, parliament.^e

P.—Was this subjection of the royal authority as lasting as it was complete?

^a Knyghton. ^b Ibid. ^c Ibid. ^d Walsingham. ^e Knyghton.

A.—The power of Gloucester being founded on injustice, vanished as speedily as it arose; the triumphant party was divested in a moment of that authority which they had obtained with so much labour, and had endeavoured to secure by shedding so much blood. In a great council (May 3, 1389) the king asked his uncle Gloucester to tell him his age: "Your highness," the duke replied, "is in your twenty-second year." "Then," added Richard, "I must certainly be old enough to manage my own concerns: I have been longer under the control of tutors than any ward in my dominions. I thank you, my lords, for your past services, but do not require them any longer."^a So reasonable an opinion no one had the courage to contradict, and Richard exercised the royal authority with so much moderation that the subsequent eight years produced no remarkable events.

F.—This contrast is thought to have been influenced by the Duke of Lancaster, who had now returned to England from his vain pursuit of the crown of Castile, in right of his second wife, Constance, lately deceased, daughter of Pedro the Cruel.

A.—Richard paid great court to this his eldest uncle, by whom he had never been personally offended, and whose temper was more moderate than Gloucester's; and he found an opportunity of obliging the duke, by passing an act in parliament legitimating his children by Catherine Swynford, which that lady had borne him before marriage, and whom he had now espoused.^b

F.—This family assumed the name of Beaufort, and had much influence on the future destiny of England. Their crest was the portcullis, which appears in such profusion in all the buildings erected by the house of

^a Walsingham.

^b Ibid.

Tudor, their descendants. The eldest son of the house of Beaufort was created Earl of Somerset.

A.—Richard at the early age of sixteen had married (1382,) the sister of the Emperor Wincenslaus, whose many virtues acquired for her the appellation of the Good Queen Anne; but she is perhaps more celebrated for having introduced the use of side-saddles into England, before which time the ladies rode astride like men.*

P.—The wars which Richard inherited with his crown still continued, with little vigour indeed, but with vast expense. An inroad of the Scots, called the battle of Otterbourne, which led to no national result,^b is chiefly remembered by posterity from its being confounded with the circumstances related in the celebrated ballad of Chevy Chace, in which the two noblemen, Douglas and Percy, are misrepresented as being both slain on the field.

F.—The extensive popularity of that composition, through the medium of the Spectator, has induced the generality of readers to consider its narrative as founded on fact:

The stout Earl of Northumberland
A vow to God did make,
His pleasure in the Scottish woods
Three summer days to take.

With fifteen hundred bowmen bold
All chosen men of might,
Who knew full well, in time of need,
To aim their shafts aright.

* * * * *

“Lo, yonder doth Earl Douglas come,
His men in armour bright;
Full twenty hundred Scottish spears
All marching in our sight.”

* * * * *

* Stow.

^b Walsingham.

With that there came an arrow keen
 Out of an English bow,
 Which struck Earl Douglas to the heart
 A deep and deadly blow.

* * * *

The ballad goes on to relate also the death of Percy, from the hand of Sir Hugh Montgomerie :

Who past the English archers all,
 Without all dread or fear,
 And through Earl Percy's body then
 He thrust his hateful spear.

But though Earl Douglas was slain in the affair of Otterbourne, Percy and his brother Ralph were merely taken prisoners, and were afterwards ransomed.*

A.—Such deeds of arms as Chevy Chace naturally depict the manners of the border, and the rivalry of the two potent lords marchers; but one cannot a little regret that any degree of poetic merit should distort the truth of history. This ballad is of the age of Elizabeth, but there are two others extant of the date of Henry the Sixth, both in very uncouth language, one called the Ancient Battle of Chevy Chace, the other the Battle of Otterbourne; which latter nearly tells the story in the same way as Froissart, who relates that James, earl of Douglas, invaded Northumberland at the head of three thousand men: whilst the Earl of Fife ravaged the western border of England, Douglas penetrated to Newcastle, where Henry Hotspur, lord Percy, lay in garrison. In a skirmish, or, as some affirm, in a personal encounter, Percy's lance, with a pennon, was taken by Douglas; and the earl, shaking it aloft, swore he would carry it as his spoil, and plant it on the walls of his castle of Dalkeith. "That," answered Percy, "shalt thou never do." And accordingly he made a night attack on the Scottish camp at Otterbourne, thirty-two

* Froissart.

miles from Newcastle: a desperate action was fought by moonlight; Douglas rushed into the thickest of the English force, armed with an iron mace; but when his followers came up, they found their heroic leader stretched on the ground, with three mortal wounds; his two squires lay dead by his side, and a priest with a lance was protecting his master from further injury. "I die," said the warrior, "like my forefathers, in the field of battle, and not on a bed of sickness; conceal my death, defend my standard, and revenge my fall."^a

F.—Froissart states, that victory rather inclined to the Scots; and the same author gives no unpleasing picture of the mutual esteem existing between the two nations: "The English and Scots," says he, "are excellent men at arms, and when they meet in battle they do not spare each other; but the victors are so proud of their conquest, and ransom their prisoners in so courteous a manner, that the captives take their departure with a "*grand merci*:" however, when in battle there is no boys' play between them, nor do they shrink from the combat."

A.—The government of Richard, though it thus continued for some years without any memorable transaction, did not secure to him the esteem of the nation; profuse and addicted to low pleasures, he spent his whole time in feasting and jollity; and in this interval he had the misfortune to be deprived of his queen, Anne (1394),^b to whom he had always been an affectionate husband, and whose death he bitterly bewailed. To repair her loss, he was imprudently affianced to Isabella, the daughter of the King of France (1396),^c a child only seven years of age.

F.—Such an unequal match caused much exasperation of feeling in the nation, as it must have appeared,

^a Froissart.

^b Ibid.

^c Rymer, vol. 7.

and indeed was probably the case, that it had been contracted by Richard for the sole purpose of fortifying himself against the attacks of his turbulent nobles, by the assistance of the French monarch, who sumptuously entertained him in the plains of Ardres, near Calais,* when Richard paid a visit to France "to fetch his little wife home."

A.—The Duke of Gloucester, dissatisfied at finding himself excluded from the direction of affairs, encouraged the national discontent, by invidiously representing the contrast between the martial glories of Edward and the Black Prince, and the inactivity of Richard; passing over the misfortunes which attended the latter years of Edward, and forgetting that, from the flourishing state of the French treasury, and the improved discipline of their armies, that no efforts which England, with her exhausted finances, could now make, had any prospect of success. Disseminating every where these seditious sentiments, which were calculated then, as well as they have ever been since, to inflame the vulgar prejudices of the nation, Gloucester embraced designs so desperate,^b that it became evident either his own or Richard's ruin was inevitable. To counteract these attempts, the king commanded his uncle to be suddenly arrested, and hurried over to Calais, where alone, by reason of his numerous partizans, he could be detained in safe custody.^c It would have been dangerous to bring so popular a prince to trial; and soon after it was reported by the governor that the duke had died suddenly of apoplexy in the fortress of Calais; but in the subsequent reign, undoubted proofs were produced that he was suffocated by his keepers.

F.—The parliamentary records contain the confession of John Halle, who was hanged for the offence,

* Froissart.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

a valet of the Duke of Norfolk's: he stated, amongst other things, that Norfolk came to him at Calais, and called him out of his bed, telling him that the king and the Duke of Aumerle had sent their valets, Serle and Franceys, for the purpose of murdering Gloucester, and that he must be present in the name of his master. Halle prayed that he might be suffered to go away, though with the loss of all his property; but Norfolk told him that he must be present, or forfeit his life, and therewithal struck him violently on the head. The confederated valets first went to a church, and were sworn to secrecy; they then repaired to Gloucester's lodging at his inn, who, seeing Serle, asked him how he did, saying, "Now I know I shall do well;" but Serle taking Franceys with him, called the duke into another chamber, and they there told him that it was the king's will that he should die. Gloucester answered, that if it were the king's will it must be so: they asked him to have a chaplain, to which he agreed, and confessed; they then compelled him to lie down on a bed, the two valets threw a feather-bed over him, three other persons held down its sides, whilst Serle and Franceys pressed on the mouth of the duke till he expired; there were three other persons in the chamber, on their knees, weeping and praying for his soul, whilst Halle kept guard at the door. The Duke of Norfolk came to them, and saw the body of the murdered Gloucester.* Such was the end of Thomas of Woodstock; popular as he might be, there is no doubt that he was factious, cruel, and unprincipled; the guilt of this deplorable catastrophe, though it cannot be justified, yet by the tyrant's law, necessity, it may perhaps admit of some extenuation.

A.—The mode by which this old lion was first caught in the snare, evinces that Richard possessed a sufficient

* Placita, Parl. vol. 3.

portion of cunning, if not of courage. The king went one day after dinner, says Froissart, to Pleshy, in Essex, with part of his retinue, where he arrived about five o'clock; the duke had already supped, as he was very sober, and sat but a short time at table; he came to meet the king, and honoured him as we ought to honour the sovereign, so also did the duchess and her children. The king partook of some refreshment, and said to the duke, "Fair uncle, have your horses saddled, but not all, only five or six; you must accompany me to London; we shall find there my uncles Lancaster and York, and I mean to be governed by your advice on a request which they intend to make me; bid your maitre d'hotel follow you with your people to London." The duke, who thought no ill, assented to the request pleasantly enough. As soon as the king had supped, and all were ready, he took leave of the duchess and her children, and mounted his horse, so did the duke, who left Pleshy with only three esquires and four valets. They avoided the high-road to London, but rode with speed, conversing on various topics, till they came to Stratford; the king then pushed forward, and the earl marshal coming suddenly behind the duke, with a great body of horsemen, and springing on him, said, "I arrest you in the king's name." The duke, astonished, said that he was betrayed, and cried with a loud voice after the king. "I do not know," says the relater, "whether the king heard him or not, as he did not return, but rode away."^a

P.—If Froissart's account can be relied on, this royal duplicity, first fawning on, and then ensnaring its victim, has something in it mightily odious.

A.—The king now finding the parliament as obsequious as it was some time before hostile, revenged

^a Froissart.

himself by successfully impeaching the Archbishop of Canterbury and the earls of Warwick and Arundel,^a who had formerly concurred in severe measures against him: the two former were exiled, the latter executed. In this age there was no dependence on the equity of parliaments, as they always conformed to present power, as one or the other faction prevailed, and they reversed, without shame or reluctance, their former most solemn decrees, provided they could retaliate on their adversaries. As a proof how little sincerity or principle actuated the great, may be inferred from the disagreement which presently took place between two of the nobility, the dukes of Hereford and Norfolk, who had encouraged these prosecutions. The former duke, who was the eldest son of John of Gaunt, either from pique or fear, accused Norfolk in parliament of having spoken to him in private many slanderous words concerning the king. Norfolk denied the charge, gave Hereford the lie, and offered to prove his innocence by single combat.^b The challenge was accepted, and the whole nation seemed anxious for the event.

F.—The conversation which led to this extraordinary exhibition has been preserved; it will afford a specimen in what manner noblemen in those days conversed on politics, and the degree of good faith and confidence which these high-born and chivalric personages maintained in their transactions with each other. The Duke of Norfolk one day overtaking by chance the Duke of Hereford, on the road between Brentford and London, thus detailed his apprehensions of the times.

“ Norf.—We are in point of being undone.

“ Heref.—Why so?

“ Norf.—On account of the affair of Radcot Bridge.

^a Walsingham.

^b Parl. Hist. vol. 1.

[An action in which the king's late favourite, the Duke of Ireland, was some years before defeated.]

"Heref.—How can that be? since the king has granted us pardon, and has declared in parliament that we behaved as good and loyal subjects.

"Norf.—Nevertheless our fate will be like that of others before us: he will annul that record of pardon.

"Heref.—It will be marvellous indeed if the king, after having said so before the people, should cause it to be annulled.

"Norf.—It is a marvellous and false world we live in; for I well know that had it not been for some persons, my lord, your father of Lancaster and yourself would have been taken or killed when you went to Windsor. The council has sworn to undo six lords; ourselves among the number.

"Heref.—God forbid! It will be a wonder if the king should assent to such designs: he appears to make me good cheer, and he has sworn by St. Edward to be my good lord and master.

"Norf.—So has he often sworn to me by God's body; but I do not trust him the more for that. He is attempting to draw the Earl of Marche into the scheme of the council to destroy the others.

"Heref.—If that be the case we can never trust them.

"Norf.—Certainly not: though they may fail to accomplish their purposes now, they will continue to destroy us in our houses ten years hence."^a

P.—To pick out materials of treason from such a conversation, we should suppose would be as difficult as the revealing of it to the ruin of the speaker was base.

F.—It is possible that Hereford might think that the pretended confidence of Norfolk, which was cer-

^a *Placita*, Parl. vol. 3.

tainly given unasked, was meant to ensnare; and knowing him to be cruel, false, and inconstant, might judge that the only way to ensure his own safety, was to reveal the particulars, though to the ruin of the speaker.

A.—The lists for the combat were appointed at Coventry (Sept. 1396) before the king, attended by all the peers in the realm, and by above ten thousand persons “in harness,” says an old chronicler,^a who is perfectly enraptured at the gorgeous display of silks, velvet, and embroidery which were exhibited on this occasion. When the combatants entered the lists, armed and accoutred, the king interposed to prevent the effusion of blood; and by a strange exercise of authority condemned both noblemen to banishment;^b Norfolk for life, and Hereford for ten years, which he afterward reduced to six. Norfolk speedily died at Venice of discontent and chagrin, universally deserted and despised.

F.—This sentence of Richard was not agreeable to the nation: it was considered as pusillanimous and vacillating; and it ultimately led to that act of oppression which hurled the monarch from the throne.

A.—John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, died (1399) remarkably opulent. The appellation of “time-honoured Lancaster,” applied by Shakspeare to this prince, implies a feeling of estimation and respect, which he never possessed with the nation. Of moderate ability, of great ambition, great avarice, and uncertain conduct, he seems always to have been more feared than loved: his name indeed, by being associated with such popular characters as Wickliffe and Chaucer, and above all by his posterity having ascended the throne of England as the ‘line of Lancaster,’ has become more celebrated than his actions or talents deserved.

^a Hall.

^b Walsingham.

F.—Of his great wealth we may judge from the quantity of gold and silver plate which he lost in the destruction of his palace at the Savoy, it being sufficient to load five waggons.^a

A.—Richard becoming jealous of the exiled Duke of Hereford, the heir of Lancaster's immense possessions, had the shameful rapacity to seize the whole estate, in spite of the letters patent^b which he had granted, empowering the duke to enter into any inheritance which might take place during his exile.

F.—This iniquitous proceeding exhausted the patience of the people, and awakened a spirit of resistance by pointing out so popular a prince as Hereford, as their leader.

A.—During the ferment, Richard had the imprudence to embark for Ireland,^c in order to revenge the death of his cousin, Roger, earl of Marche, the presumptive and declared heir of the crown, who had been lately slain in a skirmish with the natives: this nobleman left a son, of the age of six years, who now stood the representative of his father's claims. The leave which Richard took of his young affianced queen was so affectionate as to be remarked: "Never did I see," says an observer who was present, "so great a lord make so much of a lady, or show so much love for her as King Richard did for the queen."^d

P.—Shakspeare misleads his readers, by representing this child of ten years as an adult; though it must be confessed that the ludicrous execration which he puts into her mouth, when the gardener informs her of the subsequent misfortunes of the king, is more adapted to a puerile age:

Gardener, for telling me this news of woe,
I would the plants thou graft'st may never grow.

^a Knyghton.

^b Walsingham.

^c Froissart.

^d Archmol. vol. 20.

^e Richard II. act 3, sc. 4.

F.—After the death of her husband, the young queen was sent back to France under the care of Henry Percy, who protested that she was clear from all bonds of marriage, and that she was sound and entire even as she was the same day she was delivered to King Richard; and if any would say to the contrary, he was ready to prove it against him by combat.^a This princess afterwards married Charles, duke of Orleans.^b

A.—Hereford, or as he is more usually called, Henry of Bolingbroke, from the place of his birth, in Lincolnshire, embarked at Nantz, and landed, with a retinue of sixty persons, at Ravenspur,^c near the Humber, a place since swallowed up by the sea: here he was immediately joined by the earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland. He took a solemn oath that his sole purpose in this invasion was the obtaining of the duchy of Lancaster, unjustly withheld from his possession. The whole kingdom was soon in commotion, and Henry's army increased on each day's march, till it numbered sixty thousand combatants. The Duke of York, who had been left guardian of the realm, found himself quite unable to repel the torrent, and Bolingbroke conjured him not to oppose a loyal and humble suppliant in the recovery of his patrimony.^d

F.—To the spirit with which Bolingbroke was actuated the nation could not have been blind, unless it willingly shut its eyes: three of the king's ministers, the Earl of Wiltshire, Sir John Bushy, and Sir Henry Green, having sought refuge in Bristol Castle, were seized, and without trial, accusation, or enquiry, led to immediate execution.^e

A.—Richard, from the prevalence of contrary winds, remained six weeks in Ireland without the smallest intelligence of these proceedings. As soon as the tidings

^a Stow.^b Henault.^c Walsingham.^d Ibid.^e Ibid.

arrived, some of his council advised him immediately to set sail and meet the danger; but the Duke of Aumerle urged him not to be in such haste, but rather to send the Earl of Salisbury, who might collect forces in Wales and hold the field against Bolingbroke.

F.—Whether this mischievous counsel was treacherously given, as may be suspected from the character of the speaker, is somewhat doubtful.

A.—Lord Salisbury collected forty thousand men, who, impatient at the king's delay, for Richard arrived not till eighteen days subsequent, dispersed, and the earl retired to Conway Castle. The king landed at Milford Haven with a respectable force, which soon becoming dismayed or disaffected, Richard joined the earl at Conway Castle with but few followers. At their first interview Salisbury burst into tears, exclaiming, "All is lost: little did he love you who detained you so long in Ireland."^a

F.—Conway Castle was a place of great strength, capable of receiving provisions by sea, and affording the means of escape by the same channel.

A.—Henry, aware of these circumstances, formed a plan to allure the king from this stronghold by sending the Earl of Northumberland, who promised either by force or subtlety to draw him away. The earl taking with him a numerous band of archers and men-at-arms, whom he concealed in ambush at the pass of Rhudlan Rock, arrived with a few followers at Conway: he assured Richard that Lancaster's sole intention was the recovery of his land, and a desire to have a parliament assembled, in which legal accusation might be preferred against some noblemen, who were equally his enemies, as enemies of the prosperity of the kingdom.

^a Archæol. vol. 20. Histoire du Roy d'Angleterre Richard.

Richard still hesitating to leave Conway and meet his rival at Flint Castle, as pressed by Northumberland, the earl swore on the sacrament that Lancaster should faithfully observe all that he had promised.*

P.—An artifice as unworthy as unhallowed.

A.—The intentions of Richard were equally insincere; for desiring Northumberland to retire, that he might consult his friends, the king said, "I had better feign compliance; but when once I get Lancaster in my power, he shall suffer a severe and bitter punishment." Thus mutually congratulating themselves on outwitting each other, the earl left Conway Castle, the king with his suite speedily following. When he reached the pass at Rhudlan, to the left of which was the sea, and on the right a lofty rock overhanging the road, descrying Northumberland's men in ambush, he suddenly exclaimed, "I am betrayed! God of paradise assist me! Do you not see," said he to Lord Salisbury, "banners and pennons in the valley?" Northumberland now appeared and in armour. "What is the meaning of this array?" enquired the affrighted monarch, The earl explaining it from the disturbed state of the country, Richard replied, "This is not according to your promise; I want no such escort, earl: if I thought you capable of betraying me, it is not too late to return." "You cannot return," replied Northumberland, seizing the king's bridle: "I have promised to conduct you to the Duke of Lancaster."^b

F.—The interview of the humiliated sovereign with his aspiring subject at Flint Castle is described by this eye-witness, who appears to have been a French gentleman in the suite of the king, in terms of equal interest.

A.—Henry came forward in complete armour, with the exception of his helmet: as soon as he saw the

* Archaeol. vol. 20.

^b Ibid.

king he bent his knee. "Fair cousin of Lancaster," said Richard, recovering himself, "you are right welcome." "My lord," answered the duke, "I am come before my time, but I will show you the reason: your people complain, that for the space of twenty years you have ruled them rigorously; but if it please God, I will help you to govern better." The king replied, "Fair cousin, since it pleaseth you, it pleaseth me well." A repast was then provided, but of which the fallen monarch partook with small appetite and in silence.*

F.—It was in the court of the castle at Flint that a favourite greyhound, named *Math*,^b abandoned his master in distress and fawned upon Bolingbroke, which caused so much uneasy prognostication to the weak mind of Richard as even to influence his subsequent conduct.

A.—After the repast, the duke with a high sharp voice, bade bring out the king's horses, and then two sorry jades were led forth; Richard was placed on the one and Salisbury on the other, and thus equipped they were carried to Chester and placed for security in the castle, where in the bitterness of disappointment Richard exclaimed, "Ah! dear cousin of Britany, had I believed you, this man would never have offended me. Thrice have I pardoned his misdeeds: at one time my uncle of Lancaster, on whom God have mercy, would have slain him for his misdeeds, treason, and villany; and then all night did I ride to preserve him from death." Richard was next to be conducted to London: at Lichfield he was joined by Lancaster; and at this city he endeavoured to escape, but was prevented.^c A few miles from the metropolis the two princes were met by the lord mayor and the city companies: it is

* Archaeol. vol. 20.

^b Froissart

^c Archaeol. vol. 10.

even said that the recorder, in the name of the city, entreated the duke to put Richard to death.^a

F.—Henry was far too wise a man to incur at this period the opprobrium of such a crime: taking advantage of the popular gale, he determined to make parliament subservient to his scheme of dethroning his sovereign.

A.—Before entering the city, the princes separated: Henry proceeded to St. Paul's, where he prayed before the high altar, and wept for a few moments over the recent tomb of his father, the citizens exclaiming, that Lancaster ought to be a king, who so well knew how to conquer. Richard was carried to Westminster, and thence to the Tower; on the way he was greeted with curses, and the ominous appellation of bastard.^b

P.—Shakspeare's pathetic description, so well known, of 'our two cousins coming into London,' must be then set down to the imagination of the poet.

A.—The day before the meeting of parliament, Henry extorted in person an instrument of resignation^c from the fallen monarch in the Tower, who delivered up the crown and sceptre and the other ensigns of royalty, and confessed himself unworthy to govern. A charge was then presented in the House of Peers, consisting of thirty-three articles;^d the chief amount of the offences attributed to Richard in them is twofold: first, the violent conduct of the king during the last two years of his reign, particularly the revenge which he took on the great men who had formerly usurped authority over him; and secondly, the violation of the laws and general privileges of the people. The former of these accusations may be resisted, on the ground that Richard's conduct, however irregular, was supported by authority of parliament, and was but a copy of the previous violence

^a Walsing. ^b Archaeol. vol. 20. ^c Knyghton. ^d Ibid. Parl. Hist. vol. 2.

of the barons themselves, when formerly in authority, and the recent execution of the Earl of Wiltshire, Bushy, and Green, sufficiently bespoke the excesses of which that party when triumphant were capable. Of the more important charge of continual violation of the rights of the people, it is more difficult to judge; yet nothing was alleged against Richard but what had been practised by former, and continued by subsequent, monarchs; it does not appear that he ever imposed any tax, whether arbitrary or not, without consent of parliament. The thirty-three charges were however unanimously adopted by both houses, and a vote deposing the unhappy sovereign was immediately passed.

P.—Had no one the courage or the gratitude to lift up his voice in defence of a master, who must have conferred many benefits on some of his accusers?

A.—One man only, Thomas Merks, bishop of Carlisle, attempted to excuse the actions of Richard, on the ground of youth, error, or misguided counsel, which admitted a gentler remedy than the deposal of the monarch, especially without hearing his defence: he also dropped hints of the incompetency of the tribunal, as well as of the injustice of the sentence; but the effect of this bold interference was the arrest of the speaker.

F.—That such an oration was ever delivered is very doubtful. The earliest authority is Hall's chronicle, one hundred and fifty years after the event. But certain it is, that Merks, for some supposed hostility to Henry, lost his bishopric,^a being translated by the Pope to the see of Samos, *in partibus infidelium*, at the instigation of the usurper.^b

P.—Shakspeare has put this character of the prelate into the mouth of Bolingbroke:^c

^a Rymer, vol. 8.

^b Godwin, Præsul.

^c Rich. II. Act. 5.

..... Carlisle, be this thy doom :
 Choose out some secret place, some reverend room
 More than thou hast, and with it joy thy life ;
 So as thou livest in peace, die free from strife ;
 For though mine enemy thou hast ever been,
 High sparks of honour in thee I have seen.

A.—The throne being declared vacant, the Duke of Lancaster stepped forth and claimed the crown in the following singular terms :

“ In the name of Fadher, Son, and Holy Ghost, I, Henry of Lancaster, challenge this rewme of Ynglande and the crown, with all the membres and the appurtenances, als I that am descendit by right line of the blode, coming fro the gude King Henry Therde, and throge that right that God of his grace hath sent me, with helpe of kyn and of my frendes to recover it; the which rewme was in poynt to be ondone by default of governance and ondoying of the gude laws.”^a

To understand one part of this strange farrago, it must be observed, that a silly tradition once prevailed that Edmund Crouchback, earl of Lancaster, from whom Bolingbroke was descended by his mother, was in reality the elder brother of Edward the First, but set aside from the succession on account of his deformity.^b Henry's claim thus consisted of an odd mixture of descent and of conquest. At the conclusion of this speech, the Archbishop of Canterbury took the aspiring duke by the right hand^c and seated him on the throne : thus he became king, nobody could very well tell how or wherefore, and the right of the young Earl of Marche, whose father had been recognised by a former parliament as the lawful heir of Richard, was totally neglected.

P.—These circumstances are sometimes paralleled

^a Knyghton.

^b Hardyng, Chron.

^c Knyghton.

with those of the revolution in 1688. How did it happen that the one transaction proved the greatest curse, and the other the greatest blessing, which the nation ever experienced?

A.—The latter event took place in an enlightened age, and was established on the basis of public liberty; but the deposal of Richard was the act of a turbulent aristocracy, passing from one extreme of faction to another, without any attention to the general principles of liberty at all.

F.—Yet it was doubtless a national act, and expressed through the legitimate medium of parliament: the House of Commons entirely concurred with the Peers; but indeed had it been otherwise, its power at that period was too weak to resist the torrent. Richard, by a long course of prodigality and maladministration, particularly in forcing the opinion of the judges, a remarkable similarity of conduct with James the Second, had entirely alienated the affections of his people; and his recent injustice in depriving their favourite Bolingbroke of his great inheritance, had fanned their anger into a flame; since no monarchy contains a rule for deposing the sovereign, I do not see if a king is to be set aside, how it could be brought about with less violation of the forms of law.

P.—But fully granting the expediency as well as justice of deposing a tyrant, and I am afraid that Richard cannot be otherwise esteemed, it does not follow that, in an hereditary monarchy, it is either wise or just to choose a successor who has not the right of blood, and thus incur the danger of a furious civil war.

F.—This would have been a delicate question not many years ago, though now it may be discussed in safety. The parliament could scarcely act otherwise than to place Lancaster on the throne, as the young

Earl of Marche, the legal heir, was only in his seventh year: had that family of Mortimer remained in its comparatively private station, its claim would probably have quietly been forgotten; it could not have been foreseen that its heiress, by marrying into the royal house, should thus unite its pretensions with power, and unexpectedly deluge the kingdom for half a century with blood and horror.

P.—The principles of right are placed on a very slippery foundation, if their establishment is to depend on unexpected contingencies.

A.—That the revolution of 1688, and above all the act of settlement, did not involve the nation in the same misery, was equally owing to unforeseen causes. The abstract injustice of depriving the infant heir of his right was the same in both cases. Had the two pretenders of the Stuart race been otherwise than illiberal, obstinate, and senseless bigots, in all probability the House of Hanover, notwithstanding its parliamentary title, would not have continued on, even if it had ascended, the English throne. The two rebellions of the eighteenth century, trifling indeed in their effect compared with the wars of the Roses, shew how powerfully the metaphysical notion of the true heir still takes possession of the feelings of mankind.

F.—The unhappy Richard was soon destined to find, like his great-grandfather, Edward the Second, that short is the space between the prisons of princes and their graves.

A.—After being imprisoned in various places,^a he was brought to Pomfret Castle, in which he perished, February, 1400, but in what manner was never precisely ascertained: it is asserted that he was starved to death.^b The story of his being despatched by a blow on

^a Hardyng, Chron.

^b Otterbourne.

the head from a halbert, by Sir Piers Exon, who entered the apartment with eight armed men, four of whom the king slew, as it is exhibited in Shakspear's play, after Holinshed and Fabian, was long the prevailing opinion, but can scarcely be correct, as it is alluded to by no contemporary writer; and in the manifesto issued by the Percies, some few years after, against Henry the Fourth, that prince is accused of having "carried his sovereign lord to the castle of Pomfret, where he was left for fifteen days, with hunger, thirst, and cold, to perish."^a

F.—Holinshed's story is also disproved by a somewhat recent examination of the skull, in Westminster Abbey, in which there appeared no marks of any blow.* Richard seems to have died of hard usage and a broken heart.

A.—This prince attained only to the age of thirty-three years: he possessed a handsome person, his features were somewhat feminine, his manners abrupt, his temper violent, his utterance embarrassed; he had great dislike to business, was passionately fond of parade and pleasure,^c devoted to his favourites, and profuse in his liberality towards them. Richard would never listen to the truth^d or to good counsel: he did not possess the talent of acquiring the affection of his great barons, and still less the power of overawing them, by which he might have committed ten times the quantity of oppression, without fear of murmur; the true reason of his fall being that he was weak and unwarlike: this weakness perhaps proceeded less from want of natural talents, than from a neglected education, and the misfortune of so early ascending the throne. Richard presented so striking a contrast to the glory of his father

^a Hardyng, Chron.
^c Mon. Evesham.

^b Archaeol. vol 6.
^d Froissart.

and grandfather, that to account for it he was reported to be the son of a handsome canon of Bourdeaux,^a whom the Black Prince had retained as a chaplain in his household.

F.—Fenelon, in his charming Dialogue, makes the Black Prince say to his son in the shades, “C’est de quoi personne ne peut repondre; mais je ne saurois le croire.” That Richard was untaught by adversity, we have evident proof: in all his conversations there appear no self-accusations for past misconduct, no purpose of amendment, no perception of the evils of his own violence and misgovernment; but unmanly lamentations, passionate prayers to the Virgin, fruitless regrets, and denunciations of vengeance against Lancaster, and the people whom he terms false, wicked, and faithless, and begs heaven to confound both their souls and bodies.^b

A.—The enormous extravagance of Richard has been often and justly alleged as a principal cause of his ruin: wherever he lay, his person was guarded by two hundred Cheshire bowmen;^c he lived in a more sumptuous manner than any of his predecessors or successors, providing a table for ten thousand persons every day,^d who were attended by three hundred servants. On being remonstrated with at this excessive profusion, he replied, “What does it concern parliament, as long as I maintain my household without their assistance?”^e

F.—His dress was on a scale of equal expense, one of his coats being valued at thirty thousand marks.^f This love of splendid apparel infected all classes of his subjects: following the example of the sovereign, the squire endeavoured to outshine the knight; the knight,

^a Froissart.

^b Archacol. vol. 20.

^c Stow.

^d Hardyng.

^e Rot. Parl. vol. 3, p. 339.

^f Holinshed.

the baron; the baron, the earl; and the earl, the king, in dress.^a

P.—Regis ad exemplum, totus componitur orbis.

F.—Yet this passion for finery should not altogether be attributed to the example of Richard: in the late reign, the spoils of Caen and Calais were so great, that every person of rank obtained a share of them; and furred garments, fine linen, and jewels, were seen in every mansion.^b

A.—The House of Commons at another time, recommending frugality, desired that the court should not be so much frequented by bishops and ladies,^c there being thirteen of the former rank on the establishment.^d At this freedom Richard was so much displeased, that he insisted on the name of the mover of the petition, who was one Haxy,^e a clergyman, and whom that consistent assembly, in order to make atonement, condemned to die the death of a traitor; and it was merely from his clerical function that the sentence was not carried into execution.

F.—In the latter half of the fourteenth century, we can trace the early dawn of various improvements, which have since contributed so largely to the happiness and prosperity of the kingdom. One most important event is the appearance of John Wickliffe, in point of time the earliest reformer of the abuses and corruptions of the Roman church.

A.—This celebrated person was born in Yorkshire, 1324, and he is first mentioned in a controversy with the different orders of friars, against whose mendicant way of life he strongly protested.

P.—Can the original motive of his opposition to the

^a Mon. Malmesb.

^c Rot. Parl. 20 Rich. II.

^b Walsingham.

^d Stow.

^e Parl. Hist. vol. 1.

Catholic doctrine be traced to any other cause than the illumination of reason?

A.—Catholic writers wish to consider it as originating from pique and disappointment, in a cause of appeal which the Pope had equitably decided against him; but the affair was in its nature trifling, and totally inadequate to produce such a result. When Wickliffe began to lecture at Oxford, he inveighed with such vehemence against the whole body of the clergy, that he soon became the object of astonishment and complaint; and being called before the primate and the Bishop of London (1376), to answer for his conduct, would undoubtedly have met with severe castigation, had he not fortunately been protected by John of Gaunt. In the conference which took place, it must be admitted that no superabundance of courtesy was evinced on either side. Wickliffe being cited to appear at St. Paul's, was accompanied by the Duke of Lancaster and Lord Percy; which circumstance much displeasing the prelates, the bishop thus addressed the latter nobleman:

“ Bishop of London.—Lord Percy, if I had known what maisteries you would have kept in the church, I would have stopt you out from coming hither.

“ Duke of Lan.—He shall keep such maisteries here, though you say nay.

“ Lord Percy.—Wickliffe, sit down, for you have many things to answer to, and you need to repose yourself on a soft seat.

“ Bishop.—It is unreasonable that one cited before his ordinary should sit down during his answer; he must and shall stand.

“ Duke of Lan.—The Lord Percy his motion for Wickliffe is but reasonable; and as for you, my lord bishop, who are grown so proud and arrogant, I will

bring down the pride, not of you alone, but of all the prelacy in England.

“ *Bishop*.—Do your worst, Sir.

“ *Duke of Lan*.—Thou bearest thyself so brag upon thy parents,^a which shall not be able to help thee; they shall have enough to do to help themselves.

“ *Bishop*.—My confidence is not in my parents, nor in any man else, but only in God, whom I trust, by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth.

“ *Duke of Lan*.—Rather than I would take these words at his hands, I would pluck the bishop by the hair out of the church.”^b

A.—At this threat, the Londoners thinking, as well they might, that their bishop was insulted, attacked the two noblemen, who with difficulty escaped; and the court contented itself with commanding the reformer to abstain from preaching such doctrines in future.^c Wickliffe had been presented by the Duke of Lancaster with the rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire (1374), in the church of which place his original pulpit is said to be still preserved.^d This divine asserted many of the opinions afterwards maintained by the reformers: no one ever carried further the doctrine of predestination; and besides his invective against the vices of the clergy, he contended that, in imitation of their Master, they were bound to lead a life of poverty.

F.—A shocking heresy, I should imagine, in all churches. Wickliffe’s favourite dogma, that dominion was founded on grace, I must profess that I do not very well understand.

A.—Wickliffe’s proselytes were so numerous, that one author asserts^e half the kingdom to have imbibed

^a Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire.

^c Walsingham.

^d Gough in Camden.

^b Fuller.

^e Knyghton.

his tenets: many of his followers travelled up and down the country on foot, in a very plain dress, declaiming and preaching with great vehemence,^a and frequently no doubt with great imprudence. The excesses of the insurgents under Wat Tyler had excited much alarm and prejudice against Wickliffe's doctrines.

F.—It would appear from the following couplet, made by Peacock, bishop of Chichester, in the reign of Henry the Fourth, that deistical notions had crept in amongst Wickliffe's followers:

Wit hath wonder, that reason cannot scan,
How a moder is a mayd, and God is a man.

A.—The reply which was given is sufficiently judicious:

Leave reason, believe the wonder;
Belief hath mastery, and reason is under.^b

The human mind, suddenly aroused from the sleep of so many ages, was doubtless liable to be led away by its enthusiasm beyond the strict bounds of sober reason; it is difficult to ascertain Wickliffe's sentiments on many theological points, as he appears not to have been ambitious of the crown of martyrdom: when in danger, he explained away the more obnoxious meaning of his opinions by many nice and subtle distinctions.*

P.—How came the singular term, 'Lollard,' applied to his followers?

A.—Various have been the attempted explanations: the derivation of the word from *lolium*—darnel, or tares, sown by the enemy in the field of God's church, is evidently the sense put upon it by Chaucer, who in the Shipman's Prologue, when the host "Smells a Loller in the wind," makes the said Shipman observe,

He wolde sowen som difficultee,
Or springen cockle in our clene corne.

Wickliffe possessed parts and learning, and like most

^a Knyghton.

^b Barrington, *Observ. on the Statutes.*

^c Knyghton.

propagators of new opinions, was of austere morals: his works are very numerous, but they chiefly remain in MSS. What particularly endears his memory to the Protestant community, is his giving the example of translating the scriptures into the English tongue (1380), and thus tacitly admitting the right of private judgment: parts of holy writ had been before translated, but they were concealed in monasteries and libraries, and little known or consulted, even by the clergy. Wickliffe's translation is from the text of the Latin Vulgate: from too close an adherence to the Latin order of the words, the language is uncouth and less intelligible than that of his cotemporary, Chaucer; one epithet, "Paul, the ~~name~~ of Christ," for *servant*, as quoted by Fuller,^a has been often mentioned as a singular instance of the change of meaning in a word effected by the course of time.

F.—It is very extraordinary what could have induced Fuller to make this assertion; the phrase occurs not in any of the printed copies: the nearest approximation is in the description of the woman in the Apocalypse, "And sche bare a knave child." Lord Oxford's librarian, Humfrey Wanley, went to Oxford for the purpose of inspecting the MSS.^b referred to by Fuller, one in Queen's College, and two in the university library; but he found the passage, Rom. ch. i. ver. 1, to be in them all, "Paul, a servant," as in all other places, translated from "*servus*."

A.—The story of Philip and the eunuch, by a homely expression, appears in Wickliffe's translation as 'Philip and the gelding.' Numerous copies were multiplied by the aid of transcribers, and several MSS. are yet in existence. Of the pecuniary value of a copy of the New Testament alone, we are enabled to judge, from a register of the effects of the Bishop of Norwich, in 1429,

^a Church. Hist.

^b Lewis, Hist. of Translations of the Bible.

where it was valued at four marks and forty pence,^a equivalent at least to fifty pounds modern. The translation of the New Testament only has been printed.

F.—From the example of Cædmon the monk, who paraphrased various portions of the scripture so early as the seventh century, and from the existence of the four gospels entire in the Anglo-Saxon language, we have undoubted evidence of the antiquity of reading holy writ in the vernacular tongue; the cry therefore of innovation, raised by the Roman church against Wickliffe, was not very well founded.

A.—So great an alarm did Wickliffe's translation occasion, that a bill was brought into parliament^b (1390), for its suppression, but rejected through the efforts of the Duke of Lancaster; eighteen years after (1408), however, Archbishop Arundel issued a most intolerant decree, in a convocation assembled at Oxford,^c that no one should translate or read any text of holy scripture by way of book or tract; which led the way to infinite suffering and persecution.

F.—The church of Rome seems early to have been shrewdly aware of the consequences resulting from the free discussion of her doctrines and pretensions.

A.—The venerable reformer died quietly in his parsonage (1385); a cotemporary writer^d thus relates the event: "On the day of St. Thomas of Canterbury, was that limb of the devil, enemy of the church, deceiver of the people, idol of heretics, mirror of hypocrites, author of schism, sower of hatred, and inventor of lies, John Wickliffe, by the immediate judgment of God, suddenly stricken with a palsy." The Council of Constance,^e forty years after (1428), had the miserable spite to order his remains to be disinterred; with which command the

^a Archb. Usher, quoted by Fox.

^b Fox, Preface to the Saxon Gospels.

^c Lyndwood.

^d Walsingham.

^e L'Enfant, Histoire Conc. du Constance.

bishop of the diocese complying, burnt them to ashes, and cast them into the Swift, a neighbouring brook.

F.—The corruption of the ecclesiastical order at this period seem to have been at its height, and was become the general source of invective with most of the writers of the age, who now beginning to use the English tongue, caused the force of their observations to be severely felt.

A.—One of the earliest compositions possessing any sort of merit, is the Vision of Piers Plowman, supposed to be written by Robert Longlands, a fellow of Oriel College, about the year 1350: the poem consists of a series of visions, which the author imagines himself to have seen when he was sleeping, after a long ramble on the Malvern Hills; it is a caustic satire on the vices of every profession, particularly on the corruptions of the clergy; the language is very uncouth and obscure, though the work possesses much spirit and humour. Another poem, in imitation, but by a different hand, is Piers Plowman's Crede; in which a plain man resolves the doubts of the enquirer, who had applied in vain for their solution to the monks of the four mendicant orders then established in England: an occasion is thus given for exposing the monastic character, which is performed with no sparing hand. These poems are philological curiosities, as the authors did not use rhyme, but adopted the alliterative mode of the Saxon poetry, of which our modern versification retains no traces.

P.—No description of a mode of writing with which we are unacquainted, is intelligible without a specimen.

A.—Each line, you will observe, contains in it three words beginning with the same letter. One passage of

the Vision, of considerable force, is remarkable, as having given a hint to Milton in his powerful delineation of the lazar-house: it is a description of *Kynde*, or Nature overwhelming mortality with disease and misery, at the command of Conscience, and of her attendants, Age and Death:

Kynde, Conscience then heard, and came out of the planets,
And sent forth his forriours,* fevers and fluxes,
Coughs and cardiacles, crampes and tooth-aches;
There was harrowe! and helpe! here cometh Kynde,
With death that is dreadful to undo us all.
Age the hoare, he was in the va-ward,
And bore the banner, by right he it claimed;
So Kynde by corruption killed full many.
Death came driving after, and to dust pashed
Kings and kaysers, knightes and popes.

Another passage is equally remarkable, as containing a sort of prophecy of the reformation, written before Wickliffe had promulgated his doctrines:

And there shall come a king, and confess you religious,
And beat you as the bible telleth, for breaking of your rule.

And again:

And then shall the abbot of Abingdon, and all his issue for ever,
Have a knocke of a king, and incurable the wound.

This "knocke of a king," was so singularly applicable to the character of Henry the Eighth, that the passage was suspected of having been foisted into the text after the reformation; but Mr. Warton states, that he had seen it in a manuscript of the date 1400.

F.—Chaucer's satire against the clergy is more incidental, though pretty frequently repeated; and he could discriminate in his "good persone," the virtues as well as the imperfections of the clerical order. This great and accomplished genius is the only poet in the English language, till the age of Elizabeth, whose works

* Foragers.

can be perused twice, or consulted for other than philological or antiquarian purposes.

P.—But is not Gower a little older in point of time?

A.—The works of Gower are in the predicament just mentioned; they consist of three parts: the first is “*Speculum Meditationis*,” a treatise in verse, in the French tongue, and descanting with almost incomparable dulness on vice, virtue, and religion; the second, “*Vox Clamantis*,” is a sort of poetical version, in Latin, of the insurrection of Wat Tyler; these pieces have not been printed, but yet remain in MS.: his English poem called “*Confessio Amantis*,” is a long dialogue between a lover and his confessor, who illustrates his injunctions to his penitent by a series of apposite tales. This work, consisting of thirty thousand verses, is beyond conception overwhelming; and how much soever it may have been praised, it will most assuredly now be never read; it was first printed by Caxton. The language is nearly as smooth as that of Chaucer, whom he designated as his disciple, and who in return called him the moral Gower. This poet was patronized by Richard the Second: his account of an interview with royalty will afford a specimen of his style:

As it befell upon a tyde,
As thinge which shuld tho betyde,
Under the town of Newe Troy,
Which took of Brute his first joye;
In Themse whan it was flowende,
As I by bote came rowende,
So as fortune her tyme sette,
My lyege lord perchaunce I mette;
And so befell as I came nygh,
Out of my bote, whan he me sygh,
He bad me come into his barge;
And whan I was with him at large,

Amonge other thinges seyde,
 He hath this charge upon me leyde,
 And bade me do my busynesse,
 That to his high worthynesse
 Some new thinge I should boke,
 That he himself it might loke,
 After the manner of my wrytyng.

P.—This cannot be called a very poetical style; thirty thousand verses of such a description must flow on as heavily as the royal barge itself.

F.—Gower was a man of rank and fortune; he contributed largely to the rebuilding of the church of St. Mary Overy, in Southwark, in its present form, where his very curious tomb yet remains.

A.—His fame has been entirely eclipsed by Chaucer, whose personal history also is somewhat better known: by birth a Londoner, he was early patronized by John of Gaunt, to whom he became allied, by marrying the sister of Catherine Swynford. Like his patron, he was attached to the doctrines of Wickliffe, and in the reign of Richard the Second, suffered some inconveniences on that account; he died in 1400, aged seventy-two: his great merits were at once appreciated; he was styled the flower of eloquence, chief poet of Britain. No other of his works than his *Canterbury Tales*, the performance of his later years, are now read, but these evince the highest excellence. Such are the force and individuality of his characters, such the truth of his description, the correctness of costume and manners, and such the interest of his narration, that when the obsolescence of his style is a little overcome by use, these tales still afford considerable pleasure. His language was thought so excellent by Spenser, as to procure him the appellation of

Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled,
 On fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed.

To Chaucer we are indebted for the invention of the ten syllable, or heroic verse; and he improved the English tongue by the introduction of many new and significant words: he was unquestionably the first Englishman to whom the name of poet, in its genuine lustre, could be applied. The following description of an early morning's walk in Woodstock Park, has not been surpassed in the freshness of its delineation:

I rose anon, and thoughte I woulde gone
 Into the wood to hear the birdes sing;
 When that the misty vapour was agone,
 And clear and faire was the morrownyng;
 The dew also, like silver in shynyng,
 Upon the leaves as any baume swete,
 Till fiery Titan, with his persaunt^a heat,

Had dried up the lusty liquor new,
 Upon the herbes in the grene mead.

• • • • •
 And by a river forth I gan costay,^b
 Of water clear as beryl or chrystal,
 Till at the last I found a little way
 Toward a parke enclosed with a wall,
 To compass round, and by a gate small,
 Whoso that would, he freelie mighte gone
 Into this parke, ywalled with grene stone.

And in I went to hear the birde's song,
 Which on the branches, both in plain and vale,
 So loude ysang, that all the woode rong
 Like as it should shiver in pieces small;
 And as methoughte that the nightingale
 With so great might her voice began outwrest,
 Right as her heart for love would all to breast.^c

The Complaint of the Black Knight.

F.—The works of a poet, Lawrence Minot, formerly unknown to antiquaries, were a few years since discovered, in searching after the MSS. of Chaucer: they are a collection of poems upon the events of the former part of the reign of Edward the Third, and have been

^a Piercing.

^b Costoyer—to coast.

^c Burst.

edited by Mr. Ritson, who would fain persuade us that they are very interesting and valuable, though I can discover little else than the most common thoughts, conveyed in common language, with all the tiresome prolixity of the age.

A.—The Saxon tongue had now changed into English, but it is difficult to trace by what means the alteration was brought about: till a century after the Conquest, when the dawn of what may be called English is first discoverable, the Saxon continued surprisingly pure; nor does it, even in the time of Edward the Third, seem so much altered by the admixture of new words, as by changes in its own forms and terminations, for which no reason can well be assigned.

F.—Of the proportion in which Anglo-Saxon and Norman are combined in the English tongue at any given period, it is extremely difficult to judge; so little had they amalgamated at the beginning of the fourteenth century, that public speakers often pronounced a discourse to the same audience in Latin, French, and English.

A.—Till the wars of Edward the Third, French continued to be the sole language spoken at court; but it being abolished by that monarch in pleadings at law, the English tongue became of necessity somewhat more cultivated. A writer of that period, John de Trevisa, a Cornish gentleman, thus relates the appropriation of the two languages to the different ranks in society: "Gentilmen's children ben larned and taught from theyr youth to speke Frenshe, and uplandishe men will counterfete and liken himself to gentilmen, and arn besy to speke Frenshe, for to be more sette by; wherefore it is sayd by comyn proverbe, Jack would be a gentelman if he could speke Frenshe."

F.—The English was surely a dialect, uncouth, barbarous, and unformed; the same author, describing the want of uniformity in the manner of speaking, says, “Some use strange waffing, chytryng, garrying, and grysybyting, the language of the Northumbres, especially at York, is so sharp, flitting, frotyng, and unshape, that we southern men may unnethe understande that language.”

A.—As a proof of the unfixedness of orthography, we may remark, that the name of Wickliffe is found to be spelled sixteen different ways. The manners of the people too were nearly as rough as their language: an anonymous monk of Malmesbury accuses them as exceeding all other nations in pride, perjury, and dishonesty; but this is surely the splenetic ill-nature of the cloister: Froissart blames them indeed for their insolence to foreigners, which unpleasant trait of national manners is scarcely yet worn out. The Scots, according to this writer, had little or no politeness, the people in general being a kind of savages, envying the riches of others and tenacious of their own possessions; and notwithstanding the intimacy of their alliance, no very cordial friendship seems ever to have existed between the French and Scottish nations.

P.—It has often been observed, that the earliest writers in most languages have been poets: did the dawn of literature in England present an exception?

A.—One work of this era may be so considered, “*The Voiyage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile, knyghte, which treateth of the ways to Hierusalem and Marvayles of Inde, with other Islandes and Countries.*” This is really a most entertaining book, and may be read with pleasure, for the amusement it affords, independent of its antiquarian interest. The author was

born at St. Albans; he left England in 1322, and was absent about thirty-four years; at his return he was known by few people. He has been unjustly held up as a "liar of the first magnitude;" whereas his design seems rather to have been to commit to writing whatever he had heard, read, or seen, concerning the places which he visited: thus he has described monsters from Pliny, copied miracles from legends, and related stories from authors of romance.

F.—The book affords sufficient evidence to prove that the author had actually visited the countries which he professes to describe.

A.—Many things considered fabulous have been since proved true: we may give up his 'rats as big as hounds,' and his 'geese with two heads,' but his 'hens that bore wool instead of feathers,' are now known as Japan or silky fowls; besides many of his marvels are prefaced with "thei seyn, men seyne, but I have not seen it." It is surprising how many traditional absurdities and vulgar errors are to be found in this work. Sir John died at Liege, 1372. The following quotation affords a very fair sample of his style and manner: "There ben also in that countree, the isle of Calonak, a kynde of snayles, that ben so grete, that many persones may loggen hem in here schelles, as men wolde done in a lityll house; and other snayles there ben that ben full grete, but not so huge as the other, and of theise snayles and of grete white worms that han blake heddes, that ben also as grete as a man's thighe, and some lesse, that men fynden there in woodes, men maken vyaunde riall for the kyng, and for other grete lordes. And if a man that is maryed dye in that contree, men buryen his wife with him alle quyk; for men seyn there that it is resoun that sche

make him companye in the other worlde as sche did in this."

P.—Did the historians who flourished in the two reigns of Edward the Third and Richard the Second, surpass the very moderate pretensions of their immediate predecessors in that department.

A.—They continued to perform their task in the same dull, dry, drowsy, monkish style. Walter Hemmingford was a canon of Gisborough Abbey: he wrote a history of England, from the Conquest to 1308, with care and exactness; he subjoined an additional book, reaching to 1347, in which year it is supposed that he died: his narrative is perspicuous, and valuable for its references to public documents. Robert Avesbury, register of the court of the Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote a history of the reign of Edward the Third, to the year 1356, when the author died: it is a plain narrative of facts, stated with apparent candour and impartiality, accurately referring, like the last writer, to public documents. Ralph Higden's Polychronicon, so called because it comprehends the transactions of many ages, is a history of England, from the beginning of the world to his own times (1357): it is not in much estimation: much of the work is supposed to be stolen from the MSS. of Roger, a monk of St. Werburghs, in Chester, who wrote half a century before. Higden belonged to the same monastery, in which he died very aged (1363). This work was translated into English by John de Trevisa, and in it are the passages which we have just quoted; it was printed, with the language a little modernized, by Caxton, in 1482, who added an additional book: this edition is justly considered as a great curiosity. Henry Knyghton was a canon of Leicester; his history reaches from the Conquest to

the year 1395: he is esteemed an exact and faithful narrator of events within his own time.

F.—We must not pass over the Scottish historian John, a priest of Fordun, who died about 1380: his work, *Scotichronicon*, is considered as a complete and tolerably authentic history of the affairs of Scotland, though containing many legendary tales; it was so much esteemed that every convent in Scotland had a copy transcribed for its use. This author incidentally glances at several particulars of contemporary English history; but we may recollect what was observed at the close of the last conversation, that our knowledge of the events of any reign is chiefly to be derived, not from contemporary, but from subsequent, authors.

A.—The celebrated chronicles of Froissart are somewhat an exception to this remark: personally acquainted with the principal actors in the scenes which he describes, this author related every thing that he saw, and believed every thing that was told him; consequently his history is more valuable as a striking picture of ancient and chivalric manners, than as an accurate detail of facts, the narration being strangely confused and abounding in mistakes and inaccuracies.

F.—The French have considered him as partial towards the English; but who could describe the battles of Crecy and Poitiers in any terms that would not wound the vanity of the Gallic nation?

A.—Froissart was born at Valenciennes, and followed in the train of Queen Philippa to the English court, in which he resided a few years: his chronicle, in four books, narrates various transactions relative to England, France, and Spain, from 1326 to 1400. He has been called Herodotus, without his style; but this seems much too high an encomium. Doubtless, from their

dramatic painting. Froissart's pages are often highly interesting; and at other times, from the frivolousness of his facts, and the excessive minuteness with which they are detailed, exceedingly tiresome. A specimen of the importance which he attaches to the most trivial circumstances, may be seen in his account of a letter sent by Henry of Transtamare to the Black Prince on the subject of approaching hostilities: "When the letter was written King Henry had it sealed, and calling his own herald to him, said, 'Go thou, as fast as possible, by the nearest road, to the Prince of Wales, and give him from me this letter.' The herald replied, 'Willingly, my lord.' He left the king, and taking the road to Navarre came up to the prince, when bending his knee, he delivered to him the letter from King Henry. The prince made the herald rise, and taking the letter, opened it, and read it twice over, the better to understand it: when he had read and considered a little its contents, he ordered part of his council to be summoned, telling the herald to quit the place where the council was to be held."

P.—If all history were written in this style, it would be difficult to find libraries sufficient to contain its volumes.

A.—Froissart was an enthusiastic admirer of chivalry, and looked upon a knight as little less than an angel: he calls St. James, *Le saint baron St. Jacques*. He revisited England in 1395, and presented Richard the Second with a book "fairly illuminated, and covered with crimson velvet, with ten buttons of silver gilt, and roses of gold in the midst, with two great clasps gilt, richly wrought. Then the king," says he, "demanded of me, whereof it treated? and I replied, *d'Amour*; at which he was glad." With much feeling the historian

relates the melancholy end of his benefactor: "How Richard of Bourdeaux died, and by what means, I could never learn: some pitied him, and others not, saying, he had for a long time deserved death. Now consider, ye kings, lords, dukes, prelates, and earls, how very changeable the fortunes of this world are: this king reigned twenty-two years in great prosperity, and with much splendour; during my residence with him for a quarter of a year he made me good cheer, because in my youth I had been secretary to King Edward, his grandfather, and the lady Philippa of Hainault, queen of England. When I took my leave of him at Windsor, he presented me by one of his knights, Sir John Golofre, a silver gilt goblet weighing full two marks, filled with one hundred nobles, which were then of service to me, and will be so long as I live. I am bound to pray to God for him, and sorry I am to write of his death."

DISSERTATION X.

King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET, CONTINUED.

THE LINE OF LANCASTER.

HENRY IV. - - A.D. 1399.
HENRY V. - - — 1413.
HENRY VI. - - — 1422.

SECTION I.

F.— Next these the plenteous Ouse came far from land,
By many a city and by many a towne,
Thence doth by Huntingdon and Cambridge flit;
My mother Cambridge, whom as with a crowne
He doth adorne, and is adorned of it,
With many a gentle muse and many a learned wit.

Faery Queene, book 4, canto 11.

Such was the affectionate remembrance of the poet Spenser to his venerable *Alma Mater*; and cold must be the heart which has studied in these classic bowers that does not kindle with enthusiasm in revisiting the scenes of early friendships and enchanting hopes.

A.—Few spots in the kingdom are associated with

more interesting recollections than these quiet and contemplative walks, and none present a more picturesque contrast than what the luxuriant but sombre foliage of these noble elms opposes to the architectural splendour of the halls and colleges rising beyond them.

P.—The antiquity, as well as beauty of the lofty turrets of King's College Chapel gives that charm to the scene which structures entirely modern are unable to confer.

F.—Yet the general feature of the buildings in Cambridge is not that of extreme antiquity. A sharp contention once prevailed, and for aught I know yet continues, relative to the origin of this university, and its priority to that of its splendid rival, Oxford.

A.—During the Long Parliament (1640), a *subsidy* bill having been brought into the house, in which Cambridge was mentioned before Oxford, Sir Simonds D'Ewes undertook to prove that "Cambridge was a renowned city five hundred years before there was a house at Oxford standing, and whilst brute beasts fed and corn was sown on the place; which position," said he, "if I do not prove, I will yield up the bucklers."^a

F.—The superior antiquity of Cambridge rests chiefly on a passage in Bede,^b which states that Sigebert, king of the East Angles, who died in 634, instituted a school where youth might be well trained up in learning; to this the partizans for Oxford can produce no equal voucher: they assert therefore, that the particular place in which Sigebert instituted his school not being mentioned, it might possibly be in some other part of his dominions; and they claim for their own patron King Alfred, who, according to the historian Asser, con-

^a Speech, 4to. 1642.

^b Eccles. Hist. lib. 3, c. 18.

secrated Oxford as a nursery of learning in the year 876.

A.—But this passage in Asser has, by Camden and Dr. Smith, been considered as an interpolation; and there is no authentic document in which the name of Alfred appears as a benefactor to Oxford. The claims of Anthony à Wood and Thomas Hearne to the Greeks who accompanied Brutus, and established themselves at Cricklade,^a on the one side; and those of Nicholas Cantelupe on the other, in favour of a certain Cantaber, the brother of Partholanus, in the days of King Gurguntius,^b who established himself at Cær-grant, and peopled it with philosophers from Athens, we will pass over as *deliria senum*, as well as a pretended charter of King Arthur's. The question of priority is not altogether cleared up; but the oldest legal record is that relating to the establishment of Merton College, Oxford, whose statutes bear date 1274,^c at least a few years anterior to Peter House, Cambridge (1280).^d

F.—Fuller,^e a Cantabrigian, unwilling to resign the pretensions of his mother and his nurse, despatches the subject in one of the happiest and most exact similies that can possibly be met with; alluding to the delivery of Thamar's twins,^f he says, "As Zarah first put out his hand, and then drew it in again, whilst Pharez first came forth into the world; so Cambridge, with an extended arm, time out of mind, first challenging the birthright and priority of place, but afterwards drawing it in again, she lay for many years desolate and of less account; whilst Oxford, if later, larger came forth in more entire proportion, and ever since constantly continued in the full dimensions of an university."

^a Vol. i, page 13.

^b Page 20.

^c Ant. à Wood.

^d Bentham, Ely.

^e Church Hist.

^f Gen. xxxviii. v. 29.

A.—Both universities have doubtless risen from small beginnings, and in attaining their present greatness, their progress has been partly the result of wisdom, and partly of accident; but the beautiful proportions of King's College Chapel arrest our attention.

F.—In approaching this celebrated structure, we perceive that it exhibits a perfect specimen of the florid style of Gothic architecture. In this edifice are united simplicity of design, stability of masonry, and elegance of execution: the greater and smaller members are so judiciously proportioned as to produce that architectural symmetry which at once delights the eye and satisfies the mind.

A.—The upper portion of the four turrets are particularly rich and beautiful, perforated and adorned with various figures, and surrounded and crowned by purfled pinnacles. It seems to have been a principle in Gothic architecture to enrich the entrances, and in this instance the expectation excited by the magnificent and highly ornamented doorways is not disappointed by any diminution of grandeur or beauty in the interior of the edifice.

F.—The *coup d'œil* is truly enchanting: the solar rays transmitted through these gorgeous windows produce an effect not to be surpassed in the variety of light and shade: here the rich and grand, the light and airy, unite in such a delightful combination as to absorb the senses of the spectator with feelings of delight and admiration.

P.—We cannot, with Milton, call these glorious tints, "a dim religious light," as they absolutely dazzle the vision.

A.—After recovering the effect of our surprise, in analysing the building, we are first stricken with its

avenue-like length, the height of its buoyant and magical roof, and the profuse ornament which distinguishes every part: some of these decorations may have been thought superfluous or crowded, but their united effect is truly sumptuous.

F.—If the architects of this age were unguided by the rules of proportion, they yet worked upon acknowledged principles, and reconciled solidity with lightness with a better grace than artists of a later day; their efforts to produce effect never weakened the stability of their edifices.

A.—The pendulous roof has in particular challenged the admiration of all practical architects. There is a tradition that Sir Christopher Wren used to say, that if any man would show him where to place the first stone, he would engage to build another such wonder: but surely the genius that could execute the dome of St. Paul's, could not be at a loss to comprehend the mechanical construction of the roof above us, though it is acknowledged that the builder has accomplished one of the most difficult tasks in architecture.

F.—Painted windows are generally admired from their richness of colouring, but these before us are executed with so much taste and judgment as to claim the praise of pictorial skill. An erroneous tradition has prevailed that they were obliged to be taken down in order to secure them from the unhallowed attack of Cromwell's soldiers, but the provost luckily thinking that by converting the chapel into a place of training for military exercise, these enthusiasts, rather than be exposed to the weather, would endure the sight of such superstitions, they were happily preserved; an entry in the commissioners' journal had previously doomed the windows to destruction; so narrowly did the painted

saints escape from a combat with the military saints, in which I fear no miracle could have secured them the victory.

P.—A fabric so highly wrought as King's College chapel must have taken a considerable time in its construction.

A.—How much of the edifice was raised by Henry the Sixth is not ascertained, but the whole was not completed till after the accession of Henry the Eighth. In tracing the progress of Gothic architecture, we have seen how the heavy simplicity of the Saxon and early Norman semicircular arch was supplanted in the twelfth century by the lofty magnificence of the pointed arch, the first manner of which style, with its acute lancet-shaped windows, obtains in the cathedrals of Salisbury and Lincoln, and in the abbeys of Westminster and Beverley. In a century and half this style deviated into the equilateral arch, such as the cathedrals of York and Canterbury exhibit; and as invention is ever restless, the next change was in rendering the angle of the arch obtuse, as in the present sumptuous chapel, which may be considered as the consummation of Gothic architecture, as after this era the style miserably and unaccountably degenerated; but perhaps for devotional purposes the beholder may prefer the chaste grandeur of York, or even the unadorned majesty of Salisbury Cathedral.

P.—Granting that awfulness is not its characteristic, yet this admirable pile remains a glorious monument of the taste of the age and the piety of its founder, Henry the Sixth. "The meek usurper's holy head" has thus become associated with more pleasing sensations than its native insignificance would have otherwise bestowed.

F.—For the present we must put aside “the murdered saint,” as our enquiries lead us to his grandfather, Henry the Fourth, the first monarch of the line of Lancaster, whom we have seen, by a train of circumstances partly fortuitous, and by a course of action partly criminal, fix himself in the English throne.

A.—In this exalted station, however glorious at a distance, he found himself encompassed with dangers and disturbed by perplexities; unable to establish his title upon any intelligible basis, he felt that he owed his elevation to a sudden gust of popular favour, which a contrary gale might as suddenly destroy. At the first meeting of parliament a specimen of the difficulties he would meet with in governing an unruly aristocracy presented itself: the peers in that assembly broke out into violent animosities against each other, and twenty hoods and gauntlets,^a the pledges of as many battles, were thrown upon the floor by different noblemen, whilst the appellations of liar and traitor resounded through the house.^b

F.—The force of Henry’s mind however expanded with the difficulties of his situation.

A.—In the very first year of Henry’s reign a conspiracy was formed against him by several noblemen, in favour of the young Earl of Marche, whose claim to the succession had been acknowledged by a previous parliament, but the plan was defeated by the treachery of the Earl of Rutland, son to the Duke of York.

F.—This infamous person, the Earl of Rutland, without faith or honour, was in the last reign created Duke of Aumerle, but had been deprived of his dukedom at the accession of Henry. He had been a party in the murder of his uncle Gloucester, at Calais: at

^a Stow.

^b Rot. Parl. vol. 3.

the fall of Richard he deserted his benefactor and swore allegiance to Henry; he now entered into a conspiracy against his sovereign and betrayed his associates.^a The secret is said to have been disclosed by his father discovering the part of a paper concealed in his bosom containing a list of the conspirators.^b

P.—If we can imagine such a circumstance to have occurred, we must conclude that it was designed by Rutland as an excuse or extenuation of his treachery. The discovery forms the basis of a wild scene or two between this young man and his parents, the Duke and Duchess of York, in Shakspeare's Richard the Second.

A.—The conspiracy being thus frustrated, several noblemen were summarily beheaded as soon as taken,^c and no fewer than twenty-nine knights and gentlemen hanged,^d a proper prelude to the calamitous wars of the Roses, and it gave a pretext to deprive Richard of his life,^e who till this period had languished in various castles. Henry, thus receiving no gentle hints of the instability of his power, deemed it expedient to pay court to the clergy; and though he had been supposed, from his education, a favourer of Wickliffe's doctrines, he now sought by the aid of superstition to prop his tottering throne, and passed the infamous statute enforcing the writ *de comburendo heretico*.^f

F.—Such then was the first reward conferred on the nation for deposing its sovereign, and setting aside the lawful heir. Hitherto the punishment of heresy consisted chiefly in ecclesiastical censures; indeed so early as the reign of Henry the Second^g some simple German fanatics, who arrived in England, were whipped through the streets, and many of them perished with

^a Walsingham.
^b Page 201.

^c Hall.
^d Stat. 2 Hen. IV.

^e Walsingham.

^f Hall, Chron.
^g Gul. Neub. Mat. Paris.

cold and hunger; but till this statute, which to the shame of the nation continued unrepealed till the reign of Charles the Second (1677), the offence was not capital.

A.—So powerful a weapon did not remain long unemployed in the hands of the ecclesiastics. William Sautrè, rector of St. Osyth, in London, was cited before the convocation, and accused of refusing to worship the cross, and of denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. The first charge he explained away, and he also acknowledged the real presence of Christ in the sacrament; but when Arundel, the archbishop, urged him to profess his belief, that after consecration, the substance of the bread and wine no longer remained, but was converted into the proper substance of the body and blood of Christ, as really and truly as when that body was in the womb of the Virgin Mary, as it hung upon the cross, as it lay in the grave, and as it now resided in heaven, Sautrè stood aghast, and after some hesitation, declared that whatever might be the consequence he could neither understand nor believe such doctrine.* The intrepid martyr was consequently delivered over to the secular arm, and atoned for his opposition by the penalty of fire.

F.—As William Sautrè may be considered the first martyr to religious opinion in England, it is somewhat singular how little his name is known, or his sufferings celebrated.

A.—The native obscurity of the person may be partly the cause; and there was a certain degree of prevarication in his answers which, with such a dreadful death before his eyes, may well be excused. It seems that he denied a previous conviction for heresy, probably

* Fox, Acts and Monuments, vol. 1. Wilkins, Concil. vol. 3.

on the ground of not furnishing evidence against himself: this precaution a modern Catholic historian calls unparalleled effrontery; and the tone in which he treats this shameful persecution is curious: "The unhappy man," says Dr. Lingard,* very coolly, "instead of being shut up in an asylum for lunatics, was burnt to death as a malefactor."

P.—Is Archbishop Arundel's explanation of the eucharist, that after consecration the bread ceases to be bread, still maintained by the church of Rome?

F.—As that infallible mother professes never to alter her opinions, I am led to conclude that such is her present orthodox tenet; but I should imagine that a charge of lunacy would be rather fitted to the supporters than the oppugners of such a doctrine, which violates every principle of logic and reason, and supposes such a prostration of the understanding before the shrine of folly and imposture, as no other religion, however false and barbarous, can exhibit a parallel. But let not such severity of censure be construed to extend to the genuine doctrines of the Christian faith, as founded on the basis of scripture, of which the tenet of transubstantiation forms neither "part nor parcel."

A.—Henry continued in a state of great inquietude and danger; but the events of his reign would not have interested posterity, had they not been sketched by the magic pencil of Shakspeare, who has given the detail with unrivalled spirit, and with but small aberration from the truth of history. The First Part of his Henry the Fourth opens, at the close of the late conspiracy, with the king receiving intelligence from Wales:

..... But yesternight there came
A post from Wales, loaden with heavy news,

* History of England, vol. 3.

Whose worst was, that the noble Mortimer,
 Leading the men of Herefordshire to fight
 Against the irregular and wild Glendower,
 Was by the rude hands of that Welshman taken,
 And a thousand of his people butchered ;
 Upon whose dead corps there was such misuse,
 Such beastly, shameless transformation,
 By those Welshwomen done, as may not be,
 Without much shame, retold or spoken of.

Owen Glendower, descended from the ancient princes of Wales, had been attached to Richard the Second: provoked by some recent affronts, he had taken arms against Henry, and he long carried on a tedious and desultory war. The English army being dispirited by the reputation of the magical arts attributed to this Welsh chieftain,^a the play with equal accuracy goes on to relate, that the Earl of Douglas, having devastated the northern counties, was on his return overtaken by Henry Hotspur, lord Percy, at Halidown, or Holmedon Hill, on the borders, where a battle ensuing, the Scots were totally routed, chiefly by the prowess of the English archers, and Douglas himself, Mordake, the earl of Fife, nephew to the Scottish king, with several other noblemen, made prisoners.^b

..... What think you, coz,
 Of this young Percy's pride ? the prisoners,
 Which he in this adventure hath surprised,
 To his own use he keeps ; and sends me word
 I shall have none but Mordake, earl of Fife.

F.—The command of Henry to the Percies, not to ransom their prisoners,^c which, by the then established laws of warfare, was their exclusive right, gave occasion to those feelings of hostility so naturally described by the poet, and which the relative situation of the two parties, conferring and receiving obligations too great to be repaid, unavoidably excited :

^a Otterbourne.

^b Ibid.

^c Walsingham.

For, bear ourselves as even as we can,
 The king will always think him in our debt,
 And think we think ourselves unsatisfied,
 Till he hath found a time to pay us home.

A.—Such was the unlimited authority of this great family, that the Percies imagined that the same hands which had raised could pull down a king; and levying an army, Hotspur, having formed an alliance with his prisoner, Douglas, proceeded towards Wales, with the intention of joining his forces to those of Owen Glendower. Here he issued a manifesto, upbraiding the king with the perfidious means by which he obtained the crown; which must have been felt as very provoking, because very true; and he proclaimed the preferable title of the Earl of Marche.^a Henry however, undismayed, having a small power on foot, encountered the levies of Hotspur on their march towards Shrewsbury. The armies consisted of about twelve thousand men on each side, and the battle was severely disputed.^b The king exhibited great prudence as a general, and courage as a soldier.

F.—The particulars, described by Shakspeare with such graphic effect, deviate but little from the truth. Several persons accoutred in the royal garb were slain.^c Douglas displayed many eminent feats of valour; and the Prince of Wales, gallantly fighting, was wounded in the face;^d but his personal contest with Hotspur is merely a situation for the theatre; the latter fell by an unknown hand,^e which circumstance decided the victory, as the rebels, seeing the death of their leader, immediately fled.

A.—The Earl of Northumberland having been detained at home by sickness, pretended that his intention

^a Hardyng.

^d T. Livius.

^b Walsingham.

^e Otterbourne.

^c Ibid.

was to mediate between the parties, and Henry spared his life and honour. The rebels were in general treated with lenity; but the Earl of Worcester, brother to Northumberland, who was supposed to have been the chief actor in this conspiracy, and even to have deceived Hotspur, in keeping back the king's assent to certain conditions, was executed.^a

F.—A domestic anecdote strongly illustrates the misery of these civil contentions. Two knights of Staffordshire, Sir Robert Mavestone and Sir William Handsacre, set out from their seats to combat on different sides, each attended by a train of followers: on their journey the parties prematurely met and engaged; Handsacre was slain, and Mavestone proceeding fell with Percy in the field of battle. To complete the story, Margaret, the daughter of Sir Robert, being affianced, gave her hand and fortune to the son of the knight who had slain her father.

A.—About two years after this event, Scroop, archbishop of York (1405), brother to the Earl of Wiltshire, the obnoxious minister of Richard the Second, whom Henry so unceremoniously executed just before his accession; still harbouring resentment for that action, joined in a fresh enterprise with Northumberland. The prelate published an upbraiding manifesto,^b of nearly similar import with that issued by the Percies in the former insurrection, and the undertaking proved equally fruitless.

F.—This plot forms the serious business in the Second Part of Shakspeare's play of Henry the Fourth: in this drama is represented the ridiculous manner in which the prelate sent home his forces on a feigned reconciliation^c with the Earl of Westmoreland, who com-

^a Otterbourne.

^b Anglia Sacra, vol. 2.

^c Walsingham.

manded the king's army, and so exposed himself to the derision as well as to the vengeance of Henry, who caused his speedy execution.^a The death of this prelate is the first example of capital punishment inflicted on a bishop, and what no former monarch, in the plenitude of an undisputed title, had dared to perform.

P.—The perfidy on one side can only be opposed by the folly on the other:

Meest shallowly did he these arms commence,
Fondly brought here, and foolishly sent hence.

A.—The Earl of Northumberland fled into Scotland; but becoming impatient of exile, he suddenly entered England, where being encountered by the sheriff of Yorkshire, he was slain at Bramham Moor.^b And such was the fortune of Henry, that about this time his old adversary, Owen Glendower, who had caused him much vexation, was deserted by his followers, and skulking about the country, gave the king no further disturbance: he lived however till the next reign.^c

F.—Henry was indeed a remarkable instance of the power of fortune. He once escaped an insidious attack upon his life, by discovering, just before he lay down, three sharp spikes placed in his bed.^d At another time, passing over the mouth of the Thames at Queenborough, to Lee, in Essex, he was pursued by pirates, but escaped through the superior sailing of his ship, whilst those of his companions were captured.^e He found an accidental means of keeping Scotland in dependence, by retaining in captivity its young prince, afterwards James the First. This youth, at the age of eleven years, being sent by his father to France, for education, unfortunately put on shore in Norfolk on account of the violence of sea-sickness: some English sailors, aware

^a Walsingham. ^b Ibid. ^c Rymer, vol. 9. ^d Walsingham. ^e Hall.

of the value of the prize, brought him to the king, who enquired of the governor where he was ordered to carry his charge; and being answered to France, for education, he replied, "There is no occasion to go to Paris to learn French, as I understand that language, and am nearer at hand."^a The Scottish prince was ungenerously detained in England for so long a period as eighteen years. Henry made some atonement, by affording him an excellent education, by which afterwards James became qualified to reform the barbarous manners of his native country.

A.—The reign of Henry the Fourth is remarkable for the high ground which was maintained by the House of Commons: that assembly asserted a more extensive authority than it had ever assumed before, or indeed exercised for more than two centuries after: its members conditioned with the sovereign before they voted supplies;^b they regulated his household,^c and spoke their minds freely on all subjects. This however was but a temporary advantage, wrung from the delicate situation of the king, and partly expired with the occasion; but it made the monarch so fully sensible of the limitation of his authority, as to give rise to a remark that, "The worse the title, the better the prince." As a proof of the respect which Henry deemed it expedient to pay the House of Commons, he once invited all its members, as well as the lords, to dine with him.^d Nor were the arts of parliamentary manœuvring unknown or unpractised: one parliament refusing him a subsidy, he protracted the session to so inconvenient a length, that the members were glad to be released from their attendance by granting his desire.^e

^a Fordun.

^b Cotton's Abridgm.

^c Ibid.

^d Rot. Parl. vol. 3, p. 493.

^e Walsingham.

F.—A most extraordinary effort of the Commons was their attack upon the church, which they more than once renewed: they asserted, that it contributed nothing to the public burdens; they recommended the king to seize all the conventual revenues, and to leave the care of the parishes to the secular clergy, who should be paid at the rate of seven marks a-piece yearly stipend; they proposed to divide this property, which they reckoned would amount to four hundred and eighty-five thousand marks, amongst fifteen new earls, one thousand five hundred knights, and six thousand esquires, and the remainder, after endowing one hundred hospitals, would become a perpetual revenue to the king of twenty thousand marks.^a The Archbishop of Canterbury, in vindication, objected that, though the clergy went not in person to the wars, yet they sent their vassals, and offered up prayers night and day for the prosperity of the state. The speaker of the Commons smiled, and said that he thought the prayers of the church a very slender supply. The king however, afraid of the hostility of the clergy, with a severe reply to the Commons, rejected their petition.^b

P.—We should scarcely have suspected that men would talk in such a strain a whole century before the reformation.

A.—Henry's health of body did not keep pace with the prosperity of his affairs; he became afflicted with fits, probably of apoplexy,^c attended with a loathsome eruption of the face, which was considered as a punishment for Archbishop Scroop's murder. It is said that he began to doubt the truth of his favourite maxim, that success was a proof of the approbation of heaven: nor was his mind in a state of tranquillity, being alarmed

^a Walsingham.

^b Ibid.

^c Hall.

with continual suspicions of the ambition of the Prince of Wales.

F.—Whether, in consequence of this jealousy, young Henry, being excluded from public business, fell into a course of riot and dissipation, or whether his extravagances, as is more likely, were the cause of that exclusion; few very young men having a violent inclination for affairs of state; certain it is that his dissolute conduct caused the utmost uneasiness in the mind of the king, as his example indeed has since done in the minds of many an anxious parent: few prodigal heirs, when once engaged in a heedless and impetuous pursuit of pleasure, stopping at that critical point, before repentance becomes unavailable.

A.—The superior mind of Prince Henry occasionally broke out amidst his greatest excesses. Having once, it is said, struck the chief justice Gascoigne, for confining one of his riotous associates, he became sensible of his fault, and suffered himself quietly to be committed to prison, by order of the undaunted lawyer. “Happy,” said the king, when informed of the transaction, “is the monarch who possesses a judge so resolute in the discharge of his duty, and a son so willing to yield to the authority of the law.”*

F.—One of Prince Henry’s pranks, “as dissolute as desperate,” was attacking passengers in the streets and highways, and robbing them of their goods, his amusement consisting in the terror which these people exhibited on such occasions; he had a particular fancy to lie in wait for the receivers of his father’s rents, and to set upon and rob them: in such rencontres he sometimes happened to be soundly beat, but he always rewarded those officers that made the stoutest

* T. de Elmham.

resistance.* Thus, "Rob me the Exchequer, Hal," is perhaps not altogether a fiction of the poet's; and it is even probable, that the characters of the companions of the prince, including even "unimitated, inimitable Falstaff" himself, are bottomed on tradition.

A.—The prince, uneasy at being suspected of aspiring to the throne, sought an interview with his father, in which he maintained his own innocence and demanded the punishment of his calumniators. To shew perhaps that he was more governed by whim than ambition, "He was disguised," says an eye-witness, "in a gown of blue satin, or damask, wrought full of oylet-holes, and at every oylet the needle wherewith it was made, hanging still by the silk, and about his arm he wore a dog's collar, set full of SS of gold, and the tirets of the same also of pure gold."^b The king heard his complaint with attention, but prudently pointed out the necessity of waiting for reparation till the assembling of parliament. Henry's apprehensions appear to have been lulled by the interview; but though still in the flower of his age, his end was visibly approaching; a prey to perpetual anguish and remorseful suspicion, he kept the crown in his sight by day, and at night it shared his pillow.

F.—The incident of the prince removing it, supposing his father to have expired, though so universally current, from its beautiful exhibition by Shakspeare, is of very doubtful authority.

A.—The story rests on the authority of Monstrelet. The king reviving from his trance, and having knowledge that the prince had removed the crown, called him to his presence, enquiring why he had so misconducted himself? The prince with great self-possession replied,

* Stow.

^b Ibid.

* Vol. 1, chap. 101.

"Sir, to mine and to all men's judgment, you seemed to be dead in this world; wherefore I, as your apparent heir, took the crown as mine own, and not as yours." "Well, fair son," said the king, with a great sigh, "what right I had to it, and how I enjoyed it, God knoweth." "Sir," replied the prince, "if you die king, I will have the garland;^a and I trust to keep it with the sword against all mine enemies, as you have done." "Well," said the king, "I commit all to God, and remember you to do well." The expiring monarch having hinted at the turbulent disposition of his second son, the Duke of Clarence, the prince promised to behave to him as an affectionate brother, unless he should disturb the realm; "In which case," said he, "I shall teach him his duty."

F.—Henry had the intention of making a crusade, partly as an expiation for his crime, in usurping the crown, and partly as an act of policy, to employ the unquiet spirits of his kingdom. This fancy continued to the last moment of his life,^b thus accurately described by the poet:

K. Henry.—Doth any name particular belong
Unto the lodging where I first did swoon?

Warwick.—'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord.

K. Henry.—Laud be to God, even there my life must end.
It had been prophesied to me many years,
I should not die but in Jerusalem,
Which vainly I supposed the Holy Land.
But bear me to the chamber, there I'll lie,
In that Jerusalem shall Harry die.

A.—Henry expired, 20th March, 1413,^c in the forty-sixth year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign. Though below the middle stature, his person was robust and well made; his countenance commanding; but his head, says Fuller, is not so well known as his hood,

^a Hall.

^b Ibid.

^c Walsingham.

which he wore in an antique fashion, peculiar to himself: his courage in the field was calm and undaunted, in the cabinet somewhat timid; though of active talents and firm temper, no prince ever sat on a throne with greater uneasiness: yet his schemes being formed with prudence, were generally successful, though they were not always innocent, and rarely generous. Henry, by seldom pardoning those who attempted to deprive him of power, knew how to make himself feared; and he thus attained a much higher degree of authority over his turbulent nobility than many princes possessing the most undoubted title. His ambition involved him in many crimes and cares, and his country in many calamities; yet, if we may believe his constant declaration, his intention in landing at Ravenspur was merely to recover the patrimony of which he had been so unjustly deprived: urged onwards by the headlong zeal of the people, his refusal of the throne would have been as dangerous as its acceptance.

F.—Had the nation been content with dethroning Richard, and fixing the government in Henry as regent, without disturbing the succession of the Earl of Marche, how many of the subsequent inconveniences would have been obviated! But this was a pitch of refinement in politics beyond the level of the age.

A.—The popularity which attended Henry at his accession was lost many years before the expiration of his reign. This prince was twice married: by his first wife, Mary de Bohun, daughter of the Earl of Hereford, he left four sons, Henry, his successor; Thomas, duke of Clarence; John, duke of Bedford; and Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, who all became memorable personages; and also two daughters. His second wife, Jane of Navarre, had no issue. There is a strange story

relative to Henry's funeral. The corpse, it is said, was put on board a vessel, for the purpose of being landed at Gravesend, thence to be conveyed to Canterbury; but a violent storm arising, and the ship being in great danger, the seamen took the body out of the coffin, and threw it into the Thames, which immediately became calm. This imitation of the mariners respecting Jonah proving successful, the untenanted coffin was carried to Canterbury, and interred with the usual regal ceremonies.*

F.—In the rage for exhumation which has occasionally prevailed, it is surprising that the Society of Antiquaries has never ascertained the truth of the story, by an examination of the contents of the coffin.

* Peck. *Desid. Curiosa*, vol. 2.

DISSERTATION X.

SECTION II.

HENRY V. - - - A. D. 1413.

P.— Harry the Fifth is crown'd : up vanity,
Down royal state, all you sage counsellors hence.

A.—Never was a prognostication more completely reversed than what the dramatist has thus put into the mouth of the expiring father.^a No sooner had the young king acceded to the throne, than he exhibited one of the most remarkable transformations, from the thoughtless, prodigal, debauched rake, to the man of virtue, sense, and business, that is any where recorded :

The breath no sooner left his father's body,
But that his wildness mortified in him,
Seem'd to die, too; yea, at the very moment,
Consideration like an angel came,
And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him.

The metamorphosis indeed was so complete, that Henry appears not ever to have relapsed after into a single act of folly:^b but though he dismissed his former loose companions from his presence, yet he considerably made them a suitable provision, with promise of advancement on a change of conduct.^c

F.—Whether Falstaff's "Woe to my lord chief justice" be historically correct, is a disputable point, it being doubtful whether that respectable magistrate, Sir William Gascoigne, died in the year 1412 or 1413; the brass inscription on his splendid tomb in Harwood Church, Yorkshire, which would have decided the ques-

^a Hen. IV. Second Part, act 4.

^b Walsingham.

^c Hall.

tion, being torn away during the civil wars.^a Fuller, in his *Worthies of Yorkshire*, states that Gascoigne died in the reign of Henry the Fourth; but it is certain that in Dugdale's *Summons to Parliament*, a writ appears directed to this judge, in the first year of Henry the Fifth, three weeks after Easter.

A.—No prince ever mounted a throne more peaceably or with greater applause^b than Henry the Fifth: his first acts combined wisdom with humanity; he restored the family of Percy to their estates and honours;^c he set the Earl of Marche at liberty from the jealous restrictions imposed by the late king; and he caused the body of the unhappy Richard to be removed from King's Langley, in Hertfordshire, to Westminster Abbey, where a magnificent tomb was erected to his memory, with a flattering inscription.

F.—The two following absurd lines in the epitaph could surely be less applicable to no person, except in the compliment to his stature:

*Verax sermone fuit, et plenus ratione
Corpore procerus, animo prudens ut Homerus.*

A.—Amidst the general joy of the nation, one party alone remained unsatisfied, the Lollards: the doctrines of Wickliffe had taken deep root in the minds of so large a proportion of the people, and were founded on principles of reason so just, that they could not be silenced by the mere voice of ecclesiastical authority. The clergy naturally became alarmed at the progress of these opinions; and the Archbishop of Canterbury^d applied to the king for permission to indict Sir John Oldcastle, lord Cobham, their most powerful defender: this nobleman was a valiant soldier, much respected by Henry; he had been sheriff of Herefordshire, and having

^a Gough, *Sepulchral Mon.*

^b T. Livius.

^c Walsingham.

^d Ibid.

married Joan de la Pole, baroness Cobham, had been summoned to parliament as a baron by that title, amongst the peers of the realm.^a

F.—The conduct of Sir John Oldcastle in parliament was sufficiently obnoxious to the church, as he had been concerned in bringing in a bill to reduce the exorbitant revenues of the clergy, the worst kind of heresy of which he could have been guilty.^b

A.—The king, averse to the prosecution, promised that he would expostulate with the offender.^c A book belonging to Oldcastle was seized in the shop of a limner, with whom it had been left to be illuminated;^d it was read before Henry in the presence of the owner. The king declared that he had never heard doctrines more pernicious, and asked the knight what he thought of them? Oldcastle did not dispute the judgment of his sovereign, but alleged in his own excuse that he had never read more than two pages of the work; but in the course of further conversation, he spoke with so much freedom, and inveighed against the Pope, whom he called antichrist, and the son of perdition,^e with so much bitterness, that the king was offended, and resolved to give him up to the severity of the church.

F.—There can be no doubt that the doctrines embraced by the Lollards were, in their full extent, somewhat dangerous to civil as well as to ecclesiastical authority, as after times practically illustrated. Under Henry, several persons suffered on account of their religious opinions;^f but in general the Lollards in this reign, as well as in the preceding, were not ambitious of martyrdom, but timidly explained away their sentiments when threatened with punishment.

^a Dugdale, Baron. vol. 2.

^b Parl. Hist. vol. 2.

^c Walsingham.

^d Wilkins, Concil. vol. 3.

^e Ibid.

^f Fox.

A.—Not so with Oldcastle: he was tried and condemned as a heretic by the primate, Arundel, after much expostulation and entreaty; but having been sent to the Tower, he made his escape before the execution, and fled into Wales.

F.—Of the aptitude of religious prejudice to warp the understanding, we have an instance in the mild and accurate Dr. Henry, who, relating these circumstances, states that the archbishop, “to use the the exact words of the record, sweetly and modestly delivered over Sir John to the secular power, to be burned alive;” whereas it appears from the record,^a that Arundel “sweetly and modestly” detailed the proceedings of the former part of the examination, and with tears entreated Oldcastle to return into the bosom of the church, who, refusing compliance, the primate, with anguish and bitterness of heart, proceeded to give sentence.

A.—The result of Sir John Oldcastle’s history is attended with doubt and difficulty. A conspiracy was said to be formed, for the purpose of seizing the person of the king and his brothers at Eltham;^b in consequence, a considerable number of Lollards assembled, concealing themselves in thickets in the fields near St. Giles’s (January 6th, 1414); but Henry, apprized of his danger, removed to Westminster. Having shut the city gates, to prevent a reinforcement from joining the malcontents, he attacked them in the night, seized Sir Roger Acton and several other conspirators, whom he executed.^c From records still existing, it appears that many confessed that they expected to meet Sir John Oldcastle at the place of rendezvous, but whether he was actually present is unknown; and though a reward

^a Rymer, vol. 9. Wilkins, Concil. vol. 3.

^b Walsingham.

^c Fox.

of one thousand marks^a was offered for his apprehension, it was four years before he was taken, when he suffered death at Tyburn, so called, says Fuller, from the neck of offenders being tied and their legs burned in the flames. Lord Cobham underwent a dreadful punishment with the utmost constancy; a chain being fastened round his waist, he was suspended over a fire:^b so great was his enthusiasm, that with his last breath he adjured Sir Thomas Erpingham, that if the latter should see him rise from the grave in three days, he would intercede with the king in favour of the Lollards.^c

F.—From this relation, founded upon records, a doubt was early started whether Lord Cobham should be blamed for a rebel or commended for a martyr.

A.—Protestant writers have been loud in their commendation of Sir John Oldcastle, the good Lord Cobham, who is one of the very few lay persons of rank in England who have sealed their faith with the price of their blood; but it is a curious circumstance, that this indisputably valiant soldier should have been introduced on the stage as a buffoon and a coward, for a tradition has always prevailed that the character of Falstaff was written originally under the name of Sir John Oldcastle.

P.—But in the age of so zealous a Protestant as Elizabeth, was it likely that the complaisant Shakspeare would incur the danger of such an indiscretion.

A.—It arose, as I suspect, from mere heedlessness and inattention: it is acknowledged that Shakspeare took the hint of his plays on the subject of Henry the Fourth and Henry the Fifth from a former anonymous drama, entitled “The famous Victories of Henry the

^a Rymer, vol. 9.

^b Fox.

^c Walsingham.

Fifth, containing the honourable Battle of Agincourt." In this old drama, Prince Henry is the principal character: the young rake is there accompanied in his revels and robberies by three associates, Ned, Tom, and Oldcastle: the first is clearly the prototype of Poins; but Oldcastle, who is nicknamed Jockey, bears no resemblance to the inimitable compound of sense, humour, gluttony, and vice, in Falstaff, being a mere ruffian and robber, without a spark of wit or merriment about him, and not distinguished by any allusion whatever to his bulk, his cowardice, or his joviality; but Shakspeare, wanting a name for his most original creation, unthinkingly, as I imagine, adopted that of Oldcastle, already familiar to the stage as one of the prince's companions.

F.—We may suppose that the first appropriation of the name of Oldcastle to a character so disparaging and unjust, was originally a "Popish trick;" but Steevens and Malone have both endeavoured, by a laborious effort, to set aside the tradition that Shakspeare's fat knight ever bore that appellation.

A.—But, in my opinion, with no success: I have no doubt that the anonymous dramatist gave Shakspeare the name, but nothing more. Should you have any curiosity to see what sort of hints he afforded to our great poet for the character of Falstaff, you shall be presented with the first scene in the ancient play, which thus opens:

P. Henry.—Come away, Ned and Tom.

Both.—Here, my lord.

P. Henry.—Come away, my lads.

Tell me, sirs, how much gold have you got?

Ned.—Faith, my lord, I have got five hundred pound.

P. Henry.—But tell me, Tom, how much hast thou got?

Tom.—Faith, my lord, some four hundred pound.

P. Henry.—Four hundred pound! bravely spoken, lads;

But tell me, sirs, think you not that it was a villainous part of me to rob my father's receivers?

Ned.—Why, my lord, it was but a trick of youth.

P. Henry.—Faith, Ned, thou sayest true.

But tell me, sirs, whereabouts are we?

Tom.—My lord, we are now about a mile off London.

P. Henry.—But, sirs, I marvel that Sir John Oldcastle
Comes not away. Sownes! see where he comes.

Enter Jockey.

How now, Jockey, what news with thee?

Jock.—Faith, my lord, such news as passeth;
For the town of Deptford is risen,
With hue and cry after your man,
Which parted from us the last night,
And has set upon and hath robb'd a poor carrier.

P. Henry.—Sownes! the villain that was wont to spie out our booties?

Jock.—Aye, my lord, even the very same.

P. Henry.—How, base-minded rascal, to rob a poor carrier.

Well, it skills not, I'll save the villain's life,
I may—but tell me, Jockey, whereabouts be the receivers?

Jock.—Faith, my lord, they are hard by;
But the best is, we are on horseback, and they be a-foot,
So we may escape them.

P. Henry.—Well, let the villains come, let me alone with them.

But tell me, Jockey, how much gets thou from the knaves?
For I am sure I got something; for one of the villains
So belabored me about the shoulders,
As I shall feel it this month.

Jock.—Faith, my lord, I have got a hundred pounds.

P. Henry.—A hundred pounds! now, bravely spoken, Jockey.

P.—Such a personage as Jockey is here drawn
could assuredly give no hint for the character of
Falstaff.

A.—He is introduced but twice again in the old
play; and what he afterwards speaks is as little to the
purpose, either in quality or pith, as the present delect-
able specimen.

P.—But all this does not exactly prove that the
original name of Falstaff was Oldcastle.

A.—The following passage in Fuller's Church His-
tory, which author, born about ten years after the play
was written, may be almost said to be a contemporary
witness for the tradition, which is also mentioned by

Rowe: "Stage poets have themselves been very bold with, and others very merry at, the memory of Sir John Oldcastle, whom they have fancied a boon companion, a jovial royster, and a coward to boot, contrary to the credit of chronicles, owning him a martial man of merit; the best is, Sir John Falstaff hath relieved the memory of Sir John Oldcastle, and of late is substituted buffoon in his place." There is a passage in an old play called "Amends for Ladies," quoted by Dr. Farmer, which one would think nearly decisive:

..... Did you never see
The play where the fat knight, hight Oldcastle,
Did tell you truly where this honour was?

Alluding, as we may suppose, to Falstaff's well-known soliloquy on that subject; but the matter may be very fairly inferred from the plays of Shakspeare themselves: in the first act of the First Part of Henry the Fourth, the prince calls Falstaff "my old lad of the Castle;" in the second act are the lines,

Away, good Ned, Falstaff sweats to death,
And lards the lean earth as he walks along.

The measure in the first verse clearly requires a word of three syllables in the place of Falstaff, which Oldcastle would well supply; but a more convincing argument is the epilogue to the Second Part of Henry the Fourth, where the poet promises "to continue the story with Sir John in it, and make you merry with fair Katharine of France, where, for any thing I know, Falstaff shall die of a sweat, unless already he be killed with your hard opinions, for Oldcastle died a martyr, and this is not the man." Now this looks very like regret for the author's original heedless introduction of that respected name, and a wish of explaining that his facetious character was in no way meant to allude to

the Protestant martyr. As a further confirmation, that Oldcastle had appeared on the stage as a debauchee, we may cite the prologue to a serious play, called "The first part of the true and honourable History of Sir John Oldcastle, the good Lord Cobham:" this piece was published in Shakspeare's lifetime, and with his name, but is usually included amongst the seven plays discarded from his works by most of the editors:

The doubtful title, gentlemen, prefixed
Upon the argument we have in hand,
May breed suspense, and wrongfully disturb
The peaceful quiet of your settled thoughts.
To stop which scruple, let this brief suffice:
It is no pampered glutton we present,
Nor aged counsellor to youthful sin,
But one whose virtue shone above the rest,
A valiant martyr and a virtuous peer.

The 'pampered glutton,' and 'aged counsellor to sin,' have no meaning whatever as applied to the Oldcastle of the anonymous play, however they may exactly tally with the fat knight of Shakspeare.

F.—Admitting that you have exculpated Shakspeare from any malicious intention, and that you have rescued the character of Oldcastle from all suspicion of cowardice and debauchery, it may not be less an act of justice to vindicate the memory of an equally valiant soldier, Sir John Fastolff, whose name, by a slight metathesis, being changed into Falstaff by the poet, has gone down not a little impaired in the estimation of posterity. This knight was a man of family, and born in Norfolk;* he was in every action with Henry the Fifth, and acquired so high a degree of military rank and favour, as after the death of the monarch to be created a knight of the Garter. But in the change of fortune occasioned by the success of the Maid of Orleans,

* Fuller's Worthies.

Fastolff, for some imputed negligence in not bringing up his division in the battle of Patay, incurred the displeasure of the regent, Duke of Bedford, who deprived him of the garter, though it was afterwards restored, and Fastolff continued his services.* He died in the county which gave him birth, in great honour and opulence, at the age of eighty: he evinced his piety by endowing several religious houses; and it would be superfluous to set about proving that this knight could not be the corrupter of Henry's youth, in the likeness of that "old whitebearded Satan," represented by Shakspeare, as he was born eleven years only before the prince.

P.—It is surely a little hard, both upon Oldcastle and Fastolff, that by the wantonness of wit their characters should have been thus, alike misrepresented.

A.—The suppression of Lollardism not giving sufficient scope to the active spirit of Henry, he began to revolve in his mind the dying injunction of his father, not to suffer the English to remain idle in peace, but to divert their minds from a research into his precarious title by foreign warfare, which should give occupation to their unquiet spirits.

P.—Sound policy in Henry's case, though the morality of preserving our own peace and quiet by disturbing that of our neighbours, be not very discernible.

A.—The inclinations of the king were artfully instigated by Chichele, the successor of Archbishop Arundel in the primacy; for in a parliament held at Leicester, 1414, Henry being reminded by the Commons of their former project,^b for converting the lands of the clergy to the benefit of the crown, the archbishop^c with great address, in his speech to dissuade the king from such

* Biograp. Brit.

^b See page 236.

^c Hall.

a purpose, declared Henry's undoubted title to the crown of France, and offered a considerable sum from the clergy, in order to maintain his right.

F.—"At the renewed proposal of the Commons," says the chronicler,* "the abbots sweat, the proud priors frowned, the poor friars cursed, and the silly nuns wept."

A.—The state of France at this period was well calculated to try the archbishop's experiment with success, its throne being filled by Charles the Sixth, a prince of considerable merit and talents, but who having fallen into a state of phrenzy, supposed, according to the opinions of that age, to have been the effects of poison, his kingdom became exposed to the influence of two violent factions;† the one headed by the Duke of Orleans, his brother, and the other by the Duke of Burgundy, his cousin-german, who, inheriting the country of Flanders, possessed great opulence, power, and authority.

F.—A remarkable access of the king's disorder was occasioned by a strange accident which occurred at a masquerade. Five young noblemen, with the king, appeared as savages linked together, in a dress of linen, to which fur was cemented by the use of resin: the secret was so well kept, that they remained undiscovered. The Duke of Orleans, either from levity or accident, ran a lighted torch against one of the party, which immediately set his combustible habit on fire; the flame was quickly communicated to the rest; but the masks, in the midst of their torments, crying out, "Save the king! save the king!" his aunt, the Duchess of Berri, recollecting his person, threw her robes over him, and by wrapping them close, extinguished the fire. One of the masks saved his life by leaping into a cis-

* Hall.

† Monstrelet, Le Laboureur.

tern of water; but the remaining four were so dreadfully scorched that they soon died.*

A.—The Dukes of Orleans and Burgundy, moved by the cries of the nation, agreed to bury their animosities in oblivion, and swore before the altar to the sincerity of their declaration; but this solemn preparation *seem'd*, with one party at least, to have been only a cover to the basest treachery. The Duke of Orleans was slain soon after in the streets of Paris, by ruffians hired for the purpose^b by the Duke of Burgundy, who openly dared to justify the assassination.

E.—Somewhat to account for, not to vindicate, this assassination, it is stated that the profligate Orleans had the effrontery to introduce the Duke of Burgundy into a cabinet, which he said was furnished with portraits of all his mistresses, amongst which that of the Duchess of Burgundy occupied a distinguished place.^c

P.—We can then more easily lament, than wonder at such a catastrophe.

A.—The King of England, perceiving the advantages to be derived from this miserable situation of affairs, resolved to assert his right to the crown of France: a more chimerical pretension could not well be imagined; for besides the insuperable objections to the original claim of Edward the Third, if female succession bestowed the right, Henry was not the heir of that monarch: indeed the states of France were so aware of its extravagance, that they did not even deign to give it notice. But Henry, to show that he was somewhat in earnest, sent an embassy, demanding all the provinces which had been possessed by his ancestor, King John, and the French king's daughter in marriage, with a portion of two millions of crowns.^d The court of

* Juvenal des Ursins. ^b Le Laboureur. ^c Brantome. ^d Rymer, vol. 9.

France, alarmed at this exorbitant demand, offered the princess with a smaller portion, and the restitution of the Duchy of Guienne;^a but as Henry was more ambitious than amorous, these conditions were rejected, and he prepared to assert his claim by force of arms.

F.—The story of the Dauphin, at this time a mere boy, sending over to Henry a box of tennis-balls in derision,^b as intimating that these implements of diversion were more suited to his character than the pursuits of war, must be considered as the invention of historians. The French court being perfectly aware of its precarious situation, sought by every means to avert the impending danger.

A.—Amidst these mighty designs of Henry, a most unexpected conspiracy, to proclaim the right of the Earl of Marche to the crown, was formed by the Earl of Cambridge, who had married the sister of that nobleman, Lord Scrope, and Sir Thomas Grey, which fortunately was crushed in its infancy.^c But the execution of Cambridge, who was the second son of the Duke of York, left a sting which much tended to exasperate the subsequent contention of the rival families. As these conspirators had committed an act of treason against a king *de facto* seated on the throne, their pardon was scarcely to be expected; but there was a trait of great magnanimity in the conduct of Henry, who issued a general pardon to his rival, the Earl of Marche,^d whom a jealous tyrant would have found means to implicate in the guilt of the conspiracy.

F.—Nor were the candour, moderation, and sincerity of the Earl of Marche less remarkable: this nobleman relied entirely on the friendship of the king

^a Rymer, vol. 9.

^c T. Livius.

^b Otterbourne, Hist. Croyl. Cont.

^d Rymer, vol. 9.

to the end of his life, without having the least cause to repent of his confidence.

A.—The extensive preparations for the invasion of France

Had set the youth of England all on fire :
They sell the pasture now, to buy the horse.

Henry at length set sail (August, 1415,) from Southampton, and arrived at Harfleur, on the coast of Normandy, which city after a siege of five weeks surrendered; but the English army, reduced by fatigue, sickness, and the excessive heat of the weather, was so enfeebled, that the king could enter upon no other enterprize; and having sent away his transports, which could not safely anchor in an open road, Henry determined to make his way through all opposition of the enemy, with his diminished army, to Calais, and thence return to England.

F.—It seems most extraordinary that Henry should prefer encountering such an obvious and imminent peril, to the inconvenience of waiting a short time in Harfleur for the arrival of transports. A French historian,^b who professes to copy a contemporary MS. says, that he proposed to sacrifice the possession of Harfleur, provided the French would grant a safe passage for his troops through France. But this proposal is so unlike the conduct of Henry, that it can scarcely be true, especially as the French do not appear to have pressed upon the town after its capture.

A.—The French now collected a very numerous army; and as Henry advanced into the heart of France, the Constable D'Albret sent three heralds to enquire by what road he meant to march. "By that," replied the king, "which leads straight to Calais; and if my enemies

^a Monstrelet.

^b Le Laboureur.

attempt to intercept me, it will be at their peril; I shall not seek them, but I will not move a step quicker or slower to avoid them."^a It was his intention to pass the Somme at the identical ford of Blanchetaque, where Edward the Third had so critically escaped from Philip de Valois; but he found it impassable from stakes driven into the river, and the opposite bank being defended by a strong body of French troops. After much uneasiness, he had the good fortune to discover another ford near Bethencour,^b higher up the river, which was but slightly guarded, and he there carried his whole army safely over. But Henry, though he had thus overcome his first difficulty, was still exposed to the attack of the French army, which he soon discovered, drawn up in the plains of Azincour, or Agincourt, from whom he found it impossible to escape without an engagement. Henry's situation precisely resembled that of Edward the Third at Crecy, and the memory of that great victory inspired the English with hope of a similar deliverance. Overhearing one of his soldiers wishing a reinforcement from England, Henry exclaimed, "By no means; if we are victors, why should we divide our glory with many others? and if we are defeated, are we not enough to die?"^c

F.—A renowned Welsh captain, David Gam, having been sent to reconnoitre the French the night before the battle, being asked by Henry how many men he thought there might be? replied, "Why, Sir, there are enough to fight, enough to kill, and enough to run away."^d

A.—The king drew up his army on a narrow ground between two woods, which guarded each flank, and in that posture expected the enemy. In the morning,

^a Monstrelet. ^b Ibid. ^c T. Livius. ^d Powel, Hist. of Wales.

Henry appeared, mounted on a fine white charger, in shining armour, and a crown of gold on his helmet,^a adorned with precious stones: he declared that every soldier who behaved well should henceforth be a gentleman, and entitled to bear coat armour.^b The French were so unwilling to begin the attack, that Henry, apprehensive that they would discover the danger of their situation, and withdraw to a more advantageous position, commanded the charge to be sounded. About ten o'clock (25th October, 1415,) a part of his archers discharged their weapons,^c which provoked a general assault of the enemy, who being crowded in their ranks, did little execution. The superiority of the English archers soon became manifest: from behind their palisadoes, which they had fixed in their front to break the impression of the enemy, they discharged a shower of arrows with such transcendent effect, that the whole French army, both horse and foot, from their confined situation and ill discipline, became a scene of inextricable confusion, terror, and dismay. The English perceiving their advantage, rushed forth with their battle-axes, and hewed their enemies, scarcely able to make resistance, in pieces, and the whole field was presently strewed with the slain.

F.—Henry's choice of exposing his army, weakened by sickness, to the dangers of a march through such a country as France, is not more surprising than that the French should fall into the precise error of their ancestors at Crecy, by attacking the English in a strong and concentered position, where their own vast superiority of numbers could be of no avail, the very places too being but a few miles asunder: in both

^a T. Livius.^b Rymer, vol. 9.^c Monstrelet.

cases the same precipitation, confusion, and vain confidence were manifested on the part of the French; the same imprudence in the English in placing themselves in a desperate situation, with the same firmness, presence of mind, courage, and dexterity, in extricating themselves from it.

A.—Henry's person was more than once in danger: eighteen French knights forced their way to the banner of the king, and struck him down; from this peril he was rescued by the brave David Gam, and two other Welshmen, whom the king knighted as they lay bleeding to death.* The Duke of Alençon beat the Duke of York to the ground by a blow with his mace, and with another stroke cleaved the crown of the king's helmet: every arm was lifted against the assailant, who, aware of his danger, cried out, "I yield; I am Alençon;"^b but the exclamation was too late, the French prince being immediately despatched by the royal guard. An unlucky incident somewhat tarnished the glory of the day: some gentlemen of Picardy breaking into the English camp for the purpose of plunder, had taken the king's baggage, and killed several horses and men, who were left to keep watch; Henry hearing the alarm, apprehensive of a fresh attack, and knowing that his soldiers were not sufficiently numerous to guard one army and fight another, ordered his prisoners to be killed;^c but discovering the truth, he stopped the slaughter, which had fallen chiefly on the common men, the nobility being reserved to pay their ransom.

F.—On the principle of self-preservation, this slaughter may have been justifiable; but what an outcry would have been raised by English historians, had a French commander committed the same severity,

* Powel, Hist. of Wales.

^b Monstrelet.

^c Ibid.

though urged by the same necessity. The pillage however was not thought honourable, and its authors were punished for it by the French commanders.^a

A.—No battle was ever more fatal to France: seven princes of the blood were slain, and five taken prisoners. The number of the French killed was computed at ten thousand, and about fourteen thousand prisoners.^b The amount of the English force is variously stated—from nine to fifteen thousand; and their loss is equally uncertain, some estimating it as low as forty, others at a thousand. The Duke of York was the chief person slain, and thus his death became infinitely more honourable than his life.

P.—We hear nothing of cannon or musquetry at Agincourt, and we may thence fairly deduce that none were used at Crecy.

F.—One historian^c relates, that the French had engines to cast stones into the English camp; whether these were cannon or other machinery, I cannot determine.

A.—The immediate consequences of these great victories were nearly similar: instead of following up their advantages, the conquerors rather seemed to relax their efforts, and permitted the enemy leisure to recover his losses. Henry did not attempt to march to Paris, but was content with pursuing his original plan of reaching Calais, whither he soon arrived with his prisoners, whom he transported to England. The monarch soon following, was received by the nation with the utmost enthusiasm of delight and affection, the populace at Dover rushing into the sea, to bear him on their shoulders to the land.^d

^a Monstrelet.

^b Ibid.

^c T. Livius.

^d Ibid.

F.—This celebrated battle of Agincourt, however decisive, was no further the conquest of France, than as it exposed that country to all the fury of civil war, and left it open to a subsequent invasion; for it was not till after a period of two years, that Henry appeared again with a considerable army, invited by the prevalent distractions.

A.—The state of France, moral as well as political, was dreadful: no faith, no confidence, no honour. Isabella of Bavaria, the queen of Charles the Sixth, possessed much influence; she was a princess celebrated in the annals of fashion as well as of gallantry; having introduced a new head-dress, a yard high, and spreading out at the top as wide as a bull's horns,^a to accommodate which, the doorways of the royal palaces were obliged to be heightened. This princess was at first the enemy of the Duke of Burgundy; but having been herself imprisoned, her treasures seized, and her lover, Bois Bourdon, tortured and thrown into the Seine^b by the opposite party, at the head of which was her son, the dauphin, she set no bounds to her revenge and animosity: armies were raised, and a general scene of licence, massacre, and disorder, pervaded the whole kingdom.^c Henry now advanced into Normandy (1418), the greater part of which, including Rouen, he presently subdued;^d and with the fallacious reasoning of power and success, thus replied to the Cardinal des Ursins, who attempted to incline him towards peace: "Do you not see," said the king, "that God has led me hither as by the hand; France has no sovereign; I have just pretensions to that kingdom; every thing here is in the utmost confusion; no one thinks of resisting me. Can I have a more sensible proof that the Being who

^a Villaret.

^b Monstrelet.

^c St. Remy.

^d Monstrelet.

disposes of empires has determined to put the crown of France upon my head?"^a

F.—It would require no great exertion of memory to find parallels of such convenient logic in more recent times.

A.—Henry negotiated with both parties; but though Burgundy and the queen having possession of the person of the afflicted sovereign carried the appearance of legal authority, every Frenchman who paid any regard to the true interests of his country adhered to the dauphin. From the enmity of the contending factions, a circumstance occurred which facilitated Henry's views more readily than he could have possibly anticipated. A simulated reconciliation having taken place between the Duke of Burgundy and the dauphin, an interview was appointed on the bridge of the town of Montereau;^b but as both parties had reasonable causes of distrust, it was to be attended with every precaution for mutual safety: rails were drawn across the bridge, the gates on each side were guarded, and the princes entered into the intermediate space. But no sooner had they approached, than the dauphin's party drew their swords, attacked and slaughtered the Duke of Burgundy and his friends, who overcome by surprise, seem to have made no resistance. The extreme youth of the dauphin renders it uncertain whether he had been intrusted with the secret.

P.—Surely one would suppose that, for an interview between two parties, with such well-founded cause of apprehension, a bridge would be the last place in the world to be chosen, as, did treachery exist, escape was rendered impossible: but here the Duke of Burgundy tasted the bitter fruits of his own doctrine and example.^c

^a Juv. des Ursins.

^b Monstrelet.

^c See page 455.

A.—The confusion which this act of barbarity excited opened a ready path to the utmost ambition of Henry. The queen, exasperated to the utmost, thought nothing of sacrificing the interests of France and of her son the dauphin to gratify her revenge: as the English arms were now entirely predominant, she concluded with Henry, in the name of Charles the Sixth, the famous treaty of Troyes* (1420): the principal conditions of which were, that Henry should espouse the Princess Katherine; that Charles should continue to enjoy the dignity of King of France during his life; and that Henry should succeed to the crown at his decease, and be intrusted with the present administration of the government; France and England were for *ever*^b to be united under one king, but each nation to retain its several customs and privileges.

F.—It is difficult to say, had this treaty been fulfilled in its full extent, to which kingdom its consequences would have been the most pernicious.

A.—When the French queen introduced her young and beautiful daughter for the first time, Henry strove to suppress, but he could not conceal, the emotion which her charms inspired: the wary mother did not neglect to improve the advantage, and she withdrew her daughter from his sight, endeavouring by this artifice to exact more favourable conditions from the impatient lover, and to conclude the treaty on such terms as she desired. Henry however was not so to be cajoled: "I will have your princess," said he to Burgundy, "on my own terms, or I will drive your king and you out of the kingdom." "Sir," replied the duke, rather dryly, "it will fatigue you very much to drive us both out."^d After the marriage, Henry took possession of Paris, drove the dauphin

* Rymer, vol 9.

^b Ibid.

^c Villaret.

^d Monstrelet.

beyond the Loire, and the English continued their military operations with such unabated success, that they thought themselves invincible, till the Duke of Clarence, the king's brother, received a check from a small army of Scottish auxiliaries, under the Earl of Buchan, at Baugy, in Anjou (1421).^a In this skirmish the duke was slain by Sir Alan Swinton, and several noblemen taken prisoners. The action however led to no other unfavourable result, and Henry's prosperity was rendered complete by the birth of a son, the supposed heir of both monarchies. But vain and transitory was this elevation to the acme of worldly greatness; Henry was seized with a sickness, which was soon found would be mortal: of its nature historians differ; some describing it as a dysentery,^b others a fever;^c but his chamberlain, Peter Basset, declared it was a pleurisy.^d

F.—The French writers^e speak of it as a fistula, sent by the judgment of God for his usurping the seat of the French kings.

A.—Henry expressed his indifference at the approach of death, but regretted that he left unfinished the acquisition of France;^f and he conjured his friends to continue their fidelity and attachment to his infant son. Having applied himself to his devotions, when the passage of the fifty-first Psalm was read, "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem," he interrupted the chaplain, and declared that it was his intention, after subduing France, to have undertaken a crusade against the infidels:^g the same fancy attended his father in his expiring moments. To his elder brother, the Duke of Bedford, Henry left the regency of France: to his younger, the Duke of Gloucester, that of England. He died at Vin-

^a Monstrelet.

^b Des Ursins.

^c Walsingham.

^d Hall.

^e Mezerai.

^f Hall.

^g Monstrelet.

cennes,* in the thirty-fourth year of his age and the tenth of his reign, 31st August, 1422.

F.—The splendour which victory threw round the person of Henry still adheres to his memory; but the supremacy which he acquired in France is certainly not altogether attributable to the power of his arms. We must take into consideration the imbecility of Charles the Sixth, and the unappeasable factions which distracted his unhappy kingdom. Henry's situation somewhat resembled that of Louis the Eighth, when prince of Normandy, who, invited by the discontented barons in the reign of King John, had nearly taken possession of the English crown: the comparison however will never be welcome to English feelings and prejudices.

A.—Henry the Fifth possessed an elegant person, being of a tall and majestic stature, though somewhat too slender:^b his hair was dark, his eyes black and lively, and his countenance engaging: he was remarkably swift and strong, and excelled in all martial exercises: he loved music, and even performed on the organ. One of his panegyrists remarks, that he never shrunk at a wound, turned away his nose at an ill scent, or closed his eyes against smoke or dust.^d To speak of his courage would be superfluous. The solidity of his genius was evinced by his judicious improvement of the dissensions in France to promote his own aggrandizement.

P.—We naturally compare him with his great grandfather, Edward the Third, the conqueror of Crecy, to whom he appears in no point inferior.

A.—Henry was a kind husband, an affectionate brother, and a bountiful master; though it must be allowed that success gave a slight tincture of severity, perhaps we might call it of arrogance, to his character.

* T. Livius.

^b T. de Elmham.

^c Ibid.

^d Hall.

F.—A remarkable trait of this quality is to be found in an anecdote relative to his deportment towards L'Isle Adam, a French general of high rank and reputation. That officer having appeared before him in a very plain dress, he said, partly in raillery, "How, L'Isle Adam, is this the garb of a marshal of France?" To which the marshal simply replied, that it had been made to wear in the boat which brought him down the Seine. This answer, probably from the mode of its delivery, happened to displease; and Henry replied, "You are too rude in your behaviour, sir: how dare you look on a prince in the face when you speak to him?" "Sir," rejoined the marshal, "it is the fashion of my country; where if any one speak to another, though the greatest on earth, with a downcast look, we think him conscious of some baseness or guilt." "Your customs," said the king, "are very different from ours."^a

A.—The body of Henry was embalmed, and taken to Paris; it was then carried to Rouen, with a ceremony of unequalled sumptuousness and expense;^b it was next brought over to England, and deposited in Westminster Abbey: a recumbent statue was placed upon his tomb, with a head of silver, which was stolen in the time of Henry the Eighth. The domestic history of this reign is altogether swallowed up in the blaze of foreign conquest, which kept the English nation in a frenzy of joy, and completely silenced all complaints respecting Henry's defective title.

F.—Professing no great affection for the whole tribe of conquerors, it is doing this valorous prince no injustice to observe, that his victories were obtained at an immense sacrifice. The country was so depopulated

^a Monstrelet.

^b T. de Elmham.

that it became necessary to choose sheriffs for four years, because, says the record, "by wars and pestilence there are not a sufficient number of men of substance remaining to discharge the office from year to year;"^a and the prospect of England's losing its independence at length alarmed even parliament: petitions were presented entreating the king to return, and acts were passed, as in the days of Edward the Third, declaratory that no service was due to the monarch as king of France;^b but Henry was so absorbed in the pursuit of his ambition, and paid so little regard to these remonstrances and to the real interest of his country, that we are almost tempted to think that the answer which Shakspeare puts into his mouth, in reply to the dauphin's message, might be very near the truth:

We never valued this poor seat of England:
But tell the dauphin, I will keep my state,
Be like a king, and show my sail of greatness,
When I do rouse me in my throne of France.

The calamities inflicted upon unfortunate France were truly deplorable. If glory therefore arise from the gratification of selfishness, with a total disregard to concomitant misery, I prefer giving the palm of merit to a cotemporary of Henry's, the charitable Richard Whittington.

P.—"Thrice Lord Mayor of great London." The bounty of this worthy citizen is yet felt by the inhabitants of his renovated college, which graces with singular effect the great northern approach to the metropolis. The name of Whittington has obtained, by his benevolence and the fame of his celebrated cat, a wider spread than even that of the so-called conqueror of France; but how the story of this renowned quadruped originated I could never satisfactorily ascertain.

^a Stat. 9 Hen. V.

^b Parl. Hist. vol. 2.

F.—You are precisely then in the same condition as the Society of Antiquaries, who once proposed a consultation on the subject of ‘Whittington and his cat;’^a but the story getting wind, it was seized upon by Foote, who introduced it with laughable effect in his farce of the ‘Nabob,’ and the discussion was postponed. That the parentage of Whittington was not so humble as the story implies, may be inferred from a clause in the instrument of the endowment of his college, in which masses are ordered to be performed for the souls of his parents, Sir William Whittington, knight, and Joan, his wife.^b The wealth of Whittington, which was great, was nobly employed in erecting various useful works in the city of London; and in a schedule to his will, he exhibited a singular trait of kindness of heart, by directing his executors, that if they found any of his debtors not well worth three times as much as they owed him, they should cancel the engagement.

A.—Henry’s ambition has been the occasion of a lasting memorial in the noble foundation of All Souls’ College, Oxford, which was endowed by Henry Chichele, archbishop of Canterbury, for a warden and forty fellows, to put up incessant prayers for the souls of all those that had fallen in the French war, and indeed for the souls of all the faithful,^c thence called *Collegium Omnium Animarum*.

P.—It is surely hard upon the poor souls, that they have been so long deprived of the benefit to be reaped from such an institution.

A.—In less than two months after the death of Henry, the unhappy life of King Charles the Sixth of France was terminated by the same malady which had deprived him of the use of reason,^d and exposed him

^a Walpole’s Works, vol. 2, p. 251.

^c Duck’s Life of Archb. Chichele.

^b Stow, Survey.

^d Juv. des Ursins.

to every injury of fortune. The disorder which afflicted Charles was however the occasion of an invention, which has produced an astonishing effect upon society throughout Europe, the game of cards, contrived, it is believed, by Jaquemin Gringonneur, a painter of Paris, for the diversion of the royal maniac in his lucid intervals. Cards were originally high in price, and they were speedily introduced into England. Though sometimes the amusement which they afford may have deserved censure, as stimulating to the excesses of gambling and as destructive of time, which indeed might, but seldom would be, better employed, yet they will ever obtain the blessings of the unoccupied, the vapoured, and the sick. In spite of the progress of refinement, during a long succession of ages, no embellishment has been added, and little change made, in the figures of these favourite instruments of universal diversion.*

* Andrews' History of Great Britain.

DISSERTATION X.

SECTION III.

HENRY VI. - - - - A.D. 1422.

F.—THE infant Henry the Sixth, at the age of nine months, ascended the throne of England; the youngest sovereign in our annals, but not too young to be the subject of flattery: even in his mother's lap he heard, before he understood the meaning of the words, the speaker of the House of Commons thank God for giving the realm "so toward a prince and sovereign a governor."^a

A.—But parliament, though thus complaisant in words, was not indisposed to show some authority in deeds; and it proceeded to exercise a power which it had not previously exhibited: it reversed some of the provisions of the late king's will, by appointing the Duke of Bedford, and in his absence the Duke of Gloucester, protector,^b not regent of the kingdom, a title which parliament supposed to imply less authority; and it named a council, without whose advice no important measure should be determined:^c the person and education of the young monarch it intrusted to the care of Henry Beaufort, afterwards cardinal, the legitimated son of John of Gaunt, by Catherine Swynford.

F.—But though we assert parliament to have made these arrangements, we must restrict the term to the House of Peers, as the Commons would not have presumed, or indeed have been permitted, at this period

^a Fabian's Chron.^b Rymer, vol. 10.^c Cotton's Abridgment.

to interfere in the choice of a protector, further than by a bare assent.

A.—The two broad lines in the reign of Henry the Sixth, are the gradual loss of the French provinces till the year 1450, and thence the civil wars between the rival houses of York and Lancaster, till its termination in 1461. At the death of Henry the Fifth, two-thirds of France, together with Paris, were in possession of the English; and the virtues of the Duke of Bedford, who equalled the late monarch in wisdom and valour, and surpassed him in temper and clemency, promised a long continuance of their superiority, as the indolence^a of Charles the Seventh, who at the age of twenty had succeeded to the throne of France, seemed to preclude any very strenuous effort for the recovery of his kingdom: indeed the Duke of Bedford so well improved his advantages by various successful sieges,^b and especially by repulsing an attack of the French with great slaughter before the walls of Verneuil, (August 27th, 1424), that all the provinces north of the Loire remained in his possession.

F.—The battle of Verneuil having been well contested^c by the French, was at least as honourable a testimony to the skill and valour of the Duke of Bedford as that of Agincourt to Henry the Fifth; yet by the caprice of fortune, it is totally forgotten by all but antiquaries.

A.—Bedford, to secure the neutrality of Scotland, the troops of which nation in the pay of France gave much annoyance to the English, negotiated with their monarch, James the First, so long unjustly detained a prisoner; and the price of his release was stipulated at forty thousand pounds.^d Bedford also endeavoured

^a Villaret.

^b Monstrelet.

^c Ibid.

^d Rymer, vol 10.

to connect the interests, or at least the affections, of James with England, by giving him in marriage a daughter of the Earl of Somerset, and cousin to the king. This circumstance is scarcely memorable, except as it affords an opportunity of paying a just tribute to the fidelity with which James adhered to his engagements. This prince was one of the most illustrious and accomplished of the Scottish kings: an universal scholar, an excellent poet, and an exquisite musician; one of his works is still preserved, "The King's Quair," or book, from the French *châtier*; it exhibits both tenderness and elegance, but the style is too obsolete to afford much pleasure to a modern ear.

P.—Yet it would be unjust to dismiss the royal bard without a specimen of his craft.

A.—'The King's Quair' is divided into six cantos, and consists of one hundred and ninety-seven stanzas of seven lines each, written in honour of his mistress, Lady Jane Beaufort. One May morning, as James was looking down from the window of his prison in Windsor Castle into the garden below, listening to the songs of nightingales, and wondering what the passion of love could be, which he had never felt, he thus relates his sensations:

And therewith kest I doun myne eye ageyne,
 Quhare as I saw walkynge under the towre
 Full secretlye, new cumyn her to pleyne,
 The fairest or the freshest youngè floure
 That ev'r I sawe, methought before that houre;
 For quich sodaine abate, anon asterte
 The blude of al my body to my herte.

F.—James had a poetical companion in his captivity, the Duke of Orleans, who had been taken prisoner at the battle of Agincourt, and who had acquired so great a proficiency in the English language by his long

residence in this country, that he wrote several small poems, which, though some have been preserved,* I will not afflict you with a specimen.

A.—Two pieces of ancient Scottish poetry, “Christ’s Kirk on the Green,” containing a ludicrous description of a country wedding in Aberdeenshire, which began with music and dancing, and ended in a fray; and “Peblis at the Play,” describing the adventures of a company of country people who went to Peebles to see the annual games in that place; have been attributed to James the First, by Tytler, Pinkerton, and other critics; but the accurate Lord Hailes has discovered allusions in both pieces to acts of parliament passed fifty years later; besides, James educated from early youth in England, could scarcely possess that intimate acquaintance with the language and manners of the vulgar in Scotland, which these poems evince. If they must be attributed to a royal pen, James the Fifth is more likely to be their author: as his two authentic ballads, “The Gaberlunzie Man,” and the “Jollie Beggar,” said to be founded on his own adventures, are remarkable for their humour and acquaintance with low life; the style of the ballads however is so much more modern than “The King’s Quair,” that in all probability the two poems in question are of an intermediate date, and the production of a bard of humbler fortunes.

F.—It has been asserted that Scotland owes her national melodies to James the First, but their date seems of greater antiquity.

A.—The condition of the King of France after the battle of Verneuil appeared almost desperate: he had lost the flower of his army, and had no resources for recruiting it; he was reduced to so great poverty, that

* Ritson, *Ancient Songs*, Dissert.

a leg of mutton and a couple of fowls^a were the utmost fare which the royal table could afford; his spirits however remained unabated, and with genuine French frivolity, during all his distresses he contrived to have fêtes and balls; and having asked the opinion of an old officer concerning the preparations made for one of these entertainments, the veteran replied, "My opinion is, that no kingdom was ever lost so merrily."^b

F.—The extrication of Charles from this deplorable state of his affairs presents some of the most extraordinary incidents in history.

A.—It is easily conceivable that the great ally of England, the Duke of Burgundy, though excited by the highest animosity against the French king on account of his father's assassination, must yet view with considerable jealousy the success of the English arms; at this juncture, a quarrel unseasonably arising between this prince and the Duke of Gloucester, precluded their further progress. The Countess of Hainault and Holland,^c already having a husband, the Duke of Brabant, the kinsman of Burgundy, a weak and foolish youth, whom she despised, imprudently contracted a marriage with Gloucester, who, to obtain possession of the domains of this lady, kindled a sharp war in the Low Countries, which diverted a part of the English forces from their proper business of subduing France.^d But nothing shows in a fairer light the talents of the regent Duke of Bedford, than that with this disadvantage he not only retained whatever the English had previously possessed in France, but prepared to undertake an enterprize, the siege of Orleans, which, if successful, would probably have proved the final conquest of that kingdom.

^a Villaret.

^b Ibid.

^c Monstrelet.

^d Ibid.

F.—In looking at a map of France, we perceive that the city of Orleans, placed nearly in its centre, divided the provinces held by the contending parties, and opened an easy entrance to either: the importance of the possession of such a place was evident, and excited the attention of all Europe.

A.—Charles threw into the city a brave and experienced garrison. Bedford did not command the siege in person, but sent the Earl of Salisbury to invest the place with an army of ten thousand men.^a

F.—It is remarkable that in this siege cannon were first found to be of any considerable service; but the art of engineering was still so imperfect, that the English generals trusted more to the effects of famine than force.

A.—The Earl of Salisbury was in a short time killed by a cannon ball (1428),^b as he was viewing the enemy from a tower: he was the first English gentleman who perished by a great shot. The command devolved on the Earl of Suffolk; and both parties began to feel the want of provisions. There was a trivial encounter, called the battle of Herrings, in which a convoy for the supply of the English army with that fish was sharply attacked by the French, but without success, Sir John Fastolfe beating them back with much spirit.^c Numberless feats of valour were performed before the town by both parties, but the besieged became evidently straightened for food, and their surrender was daily expected. Charles, in despair, had already entertained thoughts of retiring from Chinon, where the French court then resided, and defending himself in Languedoc; but his queen, Mary of Anjou, vehemently opposed this measure, which she foresaw

^a Monstrelet.

^b Ibid. Hall.

^c Monstrelet. Hall.

would discourage his partizans, and afford them an excuse for deserting a prince, who would thus seem to have deserted himself.

F.—In this patriotic feeling she was singularly seconded by Agnes Sorel, a lady of extreme beauty, and the mistress of Charles, who lived at court in a very unusual state of amity with the queen. Agnes now threatened to leave her royal admirer if he acted with pusillanimity, and to seek a new lover in the English camp: “For there,” said she, “are men who could gain kingdoms, and who deserve the fairest women.”^a The gallant Francis the First was so stricken with her patriotism, that on seeing her portrait he produced the following quatrain:

Gentille Agnès, plus d'honneur tu merite,
La cause étant de France recouvrer;
Que ce que peut dedans un cloître ouvrir
Close nonain, ou bien dévot hermite.

P.—What was the ultimate fate of this celebrated female?

F.—Agnes, after living five years in the service of the queen, retired from court to the *Chateau de Beauté sur Marne*, near Paris, given to her for life by Charles. It was said that the affection with which she inspired the king was as much owing to her gaiety of temper, pleasing manners, and agreeable conversation, as to her personal charms; though she was so beautiful as to be called the Fairest of the Fair, and Queen of Beauty. Twenty years after this period, paying a visit to the king, for the purpose of disclosing a plot for delivering him up to the English, at which he only laughed, Agnes was seized with a disorder, which proved mortal. She became very penitent, and re-

^a Brantome. Villaret.

ceived absolution; after which, giving a loud shriek, and calling on the mercy of God, she expired.*

A.—In the present state of Charles's vacillation, despondency, and distress, relief was brought to the voluptuous monarch by a female of a very different description, Joan of Arc, the renowned Maid of Orleans.

F.—Joan is one of the immortals whose name and fame have been universally recognized, and can never die, though she has not been fortunate in the poets who have celebrated her exploits: Chapelain has been the constant butt of the French wits, and has entailed more ridicule upon her memory by his ill-executed heroic measure, than even the scandalous but spirited burlesque of another French author; nor have the verses of the present laureat of England tended much to exalt her reputation by the graces of poetry.

A.—Her story is more interesting in the plain prose of Monstrelet, an officer in the service of the Duke of Burgundy, who relates that he had seen Joan in person, and whose cautious narrative carries every appearance of truth. Joan d'Arc, the most singular of historical phenomena, was born in the village of Domremy, on the borders of Lorraine. In the service of a widow, who kept a small inn at Neufchatel, she acted as hostler, and rode the horses to water; she was particularly dexterous in mounting on the backs of these animals in the same way as that with which Dulcinea so much surprised Sancho Pança: her conduct was irreproachable, and she was robust, active, and intrepid. Her imagination becoming inflamed by the distressed situation of France, and of its youthful sovereign, she dreamed that she had interviews with St.

* Monstrelet.

Margaret, St. Catherine, and St. Michael, who commanded her in the name of God to go and raise the siege of Orleans, and conduct Charles to be crowned at Rheims.^a

P.—Is it probable that Joan was the tool of some crafty politician, or was she actuated solely by her enthusiasm?

A.—In this stage of the business, solely by enthusiasm, which was in its origin virtuous, and became in its progress sublime. She applied to Baudricourt, the governor of Vaucouleur, and revealed to him her inspirations, and conjured him not to neglect the voice of God, which spoke through her. This officer for some time treated her with neglect, but at length prevailed on by repeated importunities, he sent her to the king at Chinon, to whom, when introduced, she said, "Gentle dauphin, my name is Joan the Maid; the King of Heaven hath sent me to your assistance; if you please to give me troops, by the grace of God and the force of arms, I will raise the siege of Orleans, and conduct you to be crowned at Rheims, in spite of all your enemies."^b

F.—Whether the king and his officers believed in the divinity of her mission, or whether it were from policy that they entered into the artifice, seeing the advantage that might be made of such an instrument, is uncertain; but the vulgar most certainly believed in the truth of her inspiration, and that was enough.

P.—In a crisis of such excitation, the intellect of the "great vulgar and the small" were much upon a level.

A.—It is pretended that Joan, on her admission to the king, pointed him out at once from the rest of his

^a Villaret, Informations contenues dans les deux Procès de la Pucelle.

^b Ibid.

courtiers, though attired with equal plainness; but as she might have seen his effigy on the coin, this sagacity could scarcely be considered as supernatural; but she revealed to him, it is said, a secret^a which was unknown to all the world beside herself. The nature of this secret has been much canvassed: a MS. in the royal library at Paris, says that it was a prayer offered up mentally by the French king, but not uttered. She also demanded, as the instrument of her future victories, a particular sword, which was kept in the church of Fierbois, and which she described by its marks, and the place in which it had long lain neglected. Grave and learned divines were ordered to examine Joan's mission, and they pronounced it sacred. Her requests were now granted: she was armed *cap-à-pie*, and mounted on horseback: her dexterity in managing her steed, though the consequence of her former occupation, attracted universal admiration. Previous to her attempting any exploit, she wrote a long letter to the young English monarch, commanding him to withdraw his forces from France, and threatening his destruction in case of refusal. She concluded with, "Hear this advice from God and the Virgin."^b

F.—Such an epistle, in that age, was calculated to produce alarm; for though the English affected to speak with derision of the maid, they felt their imagination subdued with the expectation of some awful and preternatural event which was about to befall them.^c

A.—The first essay of Joan was to enter Orleans, which she effected without opposition, at the head of a convoy,^d displaying a consecrated standard, on which was represented the supreme Being surrounded with

^a Villaret.

^b Ibid.

^c Rymer, vol. 10.

^d Monstrelet.

fleurs de lys. She was received by the inhabitants as a celestial deliverer. With admirable good sense, discovering the superior merits of Dunois, the bastard of Orleans, a celebrated captain, she wisely adhered to his instructions; and by constantly harassing the English, and beating up their intrenchments in various desperate attacks, in all which she displayed the most heroic courage, Joan in a few weeks compelled the Earl of Suffolk and his army to raise the siege, having sustained the loss of six thousand men.^a

P.—This was the first half of the maid's promise to Charles; the crowning him at Rheims was the second.

A.—Such a proposal would, a few weeks before, have appeared like madness; but Joan now insisted on its fulfilment. Though Rheims was in possession of the enemy, Charles set out, and scarcely perceived that he was in a hostile country: that and every other town sent him its keys at his approach. His coronation was speedily performed, and he was consecrated with some of the holy oil which a pigeon brought from heaven to Clovis on the first establishment of the French monarchy. Joan stood by the side of the king in complete armour. As soon as the ceremony was over, she fell at his feet, embraced his knees with congratulating joy, and entreated his permission to return to a private station.^b

F.—The request, if sincere, does infinite credit to her understanding: the gratification of that moment must have been one of the most exquisite that ever fell to the lot of a human being.

P.—Of what age was the Maid of Orleans?

F.—It has been a subject of dispute: some authors assert that she was twenty-seven; but from her answer,

^a Monstrelet.

^b Villaret.

delivered before her judges, it would appear that she was born in 1411, and consequently was now but nineteen, an age incomparably more interesting.

A.—The ceremony of the coronation brought to the standard of Charles thousands of his late dispirited subjects; many towns immediately declared for him; and the English, who had suffered in various actions, at that of Jergeau, where the Earl of Suffolk was taken prisoner,^a and that of Patay, where Sir John Fastolfe fled without striking a blow,^b seemed now to be totally reversed, both in character as well as in situation. The Duke of Bedford, astonished at the change, attributed it to a supernatural and diabolical power. A fragment of his letter to the king and council is a real curiosity:

“ And all things there prospered for you, till the time of the siege of Orleans, taken in hand God knoweth by what advice ; at the which time, after the adventure fallen to the person of my cousin of Salisbury, whom God assoile, there fell by the hand of God, as it seemeth, a great stroke upon your people, caused in great part, as I trowe, of sad beleve, and of unleveful doubt, that they had of a disciple and limbe of the fiende called the Pucelle, that used false enchantments and sorcerie; the which stroke and discomfiture not only lessed in great part the number of your people then, but as well withdrew the courage of the remnant in marvellous wise.”^c

The Duke of Bedford acted with the utmost prudence and vigilance in so dangerous a conjuncture; he still retained Paris in its obedience, and endeavoured to

^a Monstrelet.

^b Ibid.

^c Rymer, vol. 10.

revive the drooping spirits of that part of the French nation which still adhered to Henry, by having the young monarch crowned at Paris (1430),^a a vain, unmeaning, and insipid ceremony, from which no advantage was derived. The English troops, not only abroad but at home, became so overwhelmed with apprehension of the supernatural prowess of Joan, that a proclamation was put forth to seize such as had deserted and concealed themselves for fear of the maid.^b

F.—From the effect of this panic the English army never recovered, when even the cause had ceased, by the capture of Joan herself in a skirmish.

A.—The Count Dunois, sensible of the importance which might still be derived from her presence in the army, exhorted her to persevere till she had accomplished all her promises, and expelled the English entirely out of France; in consequence she threw herself into the town of Compeign, then besieged by the Duke of Burgundy. The next day (May 25th, 1430), heading a sally upon the enemy, she was repulsed, and compelled to retreat after exerting the utmost valour; when having nearly reached the gate of the town, an English archer pursued her, and pulled her from her horse.^c

F.—The governor of Compeign, Flavi, has been accused, I believe unjustly, of closing the barriers against her: no complaint of Joan appears in the process, of such treachery, which had it been committed, could scarcely have been passed over.

A.—The joy of the English was as great as if they had obtained a complete victory. Joan was committed to the care of John of Luxembourg, count of Ligni, from whom the Duke of Bedford purchased the captive

^a Rymer, vol. 10.

^b Ibid.

^c Villaret.

for ten thousand pounds, and a pension of three hundred pounds* a year to the bastard of Vendome, to whom she surrendered. Joan was now conducted to Rouen, where, loaded with irons, she was thrown into a dungeon, preparatory to a trial. But as there was no reason why she should be treated otherwise than as a prisoner of war, it became necessary to interest the clergy in the cause, and an ecclesiastical commission was formed, to try the heroine on a charge of sorcery, impiety, idolatry, and magic.^b

P.—Did the court of France employ no means to save her from the too probable consequences of her situation?

A.—From the moment of her captivity, the unfortunate maid seems to have been totally forgotten: no sum was offered for her ransom; no attempt made to alleviate the rigour of her confinement; no notice taken of her trial and execution. It has been said,^c but probably without truth, that Agnes Sorel, jealous of the liberator of the king, and fearful of the ascendancy which Joan might obtain over him, much contributed to this culpable indifference of Charles, who, without an effort, left the heroic restorer of his kingdom to perish.

P.—So much for the gratitude of monarchs!

A.—The judges who formed the ecclesiastical court were all, except Cardinal Beaufort, Frenchmen in the English interest; and a most extraordinary trial ensued. Joan frequently exhibited in her answers a wisdom superior to the age: harassed with a variety of the most ridiculous questions, she never lost her presence of mind, or betrayed any symptoms of weakness: her enthusiasm was doubtless sincere; she asserted

* Villaret.

^b Ibid.

^c Pere Daniel.

that she frequently heard a voice from heaven, and in the place where she heard it, she saw also a light, which she mistook for an angel. Being asked whether she had ever seen any fairies? she answered no; but that one of her godmothers pretended to have seen some at the Fairy Tree of Domremy, but that she herself did not believe the report. Sometimes her judges asked her different questions altogether: "One after the other, gentlemen, if you please," observed Joan. When she desired to be eased of her chains, it was objected that she had endeavoured to escape by throwing herself from a tower; she confessed the fact, and maintained the justice of her intention. Being asked why she carried the standard consecrated by magical enchantment at the coronation of Charles at Rheims? she nobly answered, that those who shared the danger were entitled to share the glory.^a A learned doctor having enquired whether St. Michael, when he appeared to her, were clothed or naked? she replied, that God had power to clothe his saints in what manner he pleased. Being pressed upon the subject of her revelations, she declared that, if the church rejected them, she was willing to believe the possibility of her having been deceived. In the end she was condemned for all the crimes of which she had been accused, aggravated by that of heresy, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment, to be fed during life on bread and water.^b

F.—The English were enraged that she was not condemned to death. "Wait but a little," said one of her sycophantic judges, "we shall soon find the means to ensnare her." And this was effected by a grievous accusation, which, though somewhat countenanced by the Levitical law, has been seldom urged in modern times,

^a Villaret.

^b Ibid.

the wearing of man's attire. Joan had been charged with this heinous offence, but she promised not to repeat it. A suit of man's apparel was designedly placed in her chamber, and her own garments, as some authors say, being removed, she clothed herself in the forbidden garb, and her keepers surprising her in that dress, she was adjudged to death as a relapsed heretic, and was condemned to be burned in the market-place at Rouen.*

A.—In justification of this relapse, Joan pleaded that the saints had advised her to resume those garments, and that she had obeyed God rather than man. At the view of the fatal stake, Joan did not exhibit those marks of triumph, or even of indifference, which many of her sex, at the prospect of suffering for conscience sake, have often discovered; on the contrary, and it is no diminution of her character as a woman, she wept in all the bitterness of agony and distress. On her passage to the scaffold, she exclaimed, "Ah, Rouen, Rouen, thou wilt be my last resting-place!" Upon the front of the pile of wood on which she suffered, a tablet was affixed, with this charitable inscription: "Joan, who made herself be called the maid, a pernicious liar, a deceiver of the people, a sorceress, superstitious, presumptuous, cruel, a blasphemer, an infidel, a murderer, an idolater, a worshipper of the devil, an apostate, a schismatic, and a heretic."^b

P.—It is difficult to say whether the ingratitude of her friends or the cruelty of her enemies were the more odious.

A.—The memory of Joan, as might be supposed, was never very popular in England, but rather the object of abhorrence: Shakspeare, who well knew what would please his audience, has represented her as

* Villaret.

^b Ibid.

a sorceress, and of abandoned conduct, following the authority of Holinshed, who says, that the maid was "not able to hold herself in any towardness of grace." But the correctness of Joan's demeanour is unimpeached: she never slept in the camp, unless attended by her two brothers, and she did not then put off her armour.* That she was a person inspired either by God or the devil, was long believed both by French and English: Rapin makes a very prolix dissertation to prove that she might be neither. Her family was ennobled by the name of De Lys, and it is said that some of their descendants are yet living.^b

F.—In 1608, Lude de la Maire, descended by his mother from the family of Joan of Arc, enregistered his letters of nobility. In France, after the death of Joan, more than one adventurer assumed her name, and many had the folly to believe in the imposture.^c

A.—Joan's predictions, though uninspired, were founded on so much good sense, that they commonly came to pass. Once, during her imprisonment, the Earls of Warwick and Stafford paying her a visit, and discoursing about her ransom, she said, "I know ye well; you have neither the power nor the will to ransom me; you think that when you have slain me, you shall conquer France; but you will never bring that about, although you were there, and one hundred thousand God-dammes in this land more than there are:" in allusion to that profane accomplishment which for so many ages distinguished the English army. The gallant Stafford drew his sword, and would have stabbed her, had he not been prevented by Warwick.^d

F.—Yet there were some persons found, even amongst the English, whose natural sense of equity was affected by the injustice done to this admirable

* Villaret.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

^d Ibid.

heroine: a secretary of the king exclaimed, "We are lost and dishonoured by the hideous torture inflicted on an innocent woman.^a Her judges were universally execrated, and in the reign of the next French monarch, two of them who yet survived, suffered, not undeservedly, the *lex talionis*.^b

A.—The execution of Joan did not retrieve the affairs of England: a domestic quarrel between the Dukes of Bedford and Burgundy^c alienated the mind of the latter from the English interest, and he concluded at Arras a treaty with the King of France. The Duke of Bedford survived not more than four years the execution of the Maid of Orleans, dying at Rouen, September 14, 1435:^d a prince of such eminent talents and virtues, that we are the more disposed to regret that his memory should be sullied by an act of so much barbarity.

F.—To the military character of Bedford we have the unprejudiced testimony of Louis the Eleventh, who being one day at the church of Rouen, and looking upon his tomb, it was suggested by one of the courtiers to demolish that standing memorial of the dishonour of France. "No," replied Louis, "let the ashes of a prince rest in peace, who, were he alive, would make the stoutest of us tremble."^e

A.—The loss of Paris speedily followed the death of Bedford, and one city after another gradually reverted to the French crown.

P.— Star after star went out, and all was night.

A.—It would be of little interest to relate the various proposals for peace made and rejected, or the successive skirmishes and affrays, which decided nothing. Rouen having revolted, the whole of Normandy was speedily lost (1450): this was followed by the

^a Villaret.

^b Ibid.

^c Monstrelet.

^d Ibid.

^e Hall.

surrender of Bordeaux and Bayonne;^a in an unsuccessful attempt of the English to recover these places, the veteran Talbot, now Earl of Shrewsbury, and his son, the Lord Lisle, were killed on the field of battle (1453). Shrewsbury was so much the terror of the French, that the women used to frighten their children, by crying "The Talbot cometh."^b The English were thus entirely expelled from Guienne, which had remained united to England since the accession of Henry the Second, a period of three centuries. The war had now lasted thirty-eight years, and had destroyed, according to the opinion of Cardinal Beaufort,^c as many men as remained in both kingdoms. As the conquest of the French provinces by Henry the Fifth was owing to the discord of the violent factions in France, so was their loss attributable to the no less violent factions which now distracted England. That the ancient French wars, whilst successful, were highly popular, we have unquestioned testimony, and to this day they consecrate the glory of our Edwards and our Henrys, even in other opinions than those of the mere vulgar.

F.—At this period France had exhibited no dangerous ascendancy in Europe, nor did she interfere with the commerce or manufactories of England. We have already seen that the claims of the Plantagenet family to the French crown were altogether chimerical; unless therefore from the mere love of plunder, it is difficult to account for the extreme fondness always evinced by the English nation for a war with France.

P.—May not a latent desire in the Plantagenet family to recover the possessions of their ancestors, lost by King John, afford an explanation of the cause, and in some measure a justification of the attack?

^a Monstrelet.

^b Hall.

^c Rymer, vol. 10.

A.—The narrative of the domestic situation of England has been somewhat anticipated; but the war swallowed up every other interest, and few events occurred which can claim the least attention from posterity. Henry the Sixth continued all his life a cipher; and the council was now divided between the opinions of Cardinal Beaufort, a prelate of great capacity and experience, but factious and intriguing, and the Duke of Gloucester, uncle to the young king, a prince of spirit and generosity, but headstrong and imprudent. In a contest between such parties, it is easy to foresee which side would prevail. As affairs declined in France, the cardinal had always encouraged proposals of accommodation, which Gloucester, brought up in the lofty pretensions inspired by the success of Henry the Fifth, as constantly opposed. When the young king reached the age of manhood, it appeared obvious, from the softness of his temper and the weakness of his understanding, that his reign would prove a perpetual minority; and each party became desirous of choosing him a queen, who, owing her elevation to their assistance, might obtain for them a lasting ascendancy. Such a princess was found in Margaret of Anjou,^a daughter of Regnier, titular King of Sicily, Naples, and Jerusalem, who with these magnificent titles possessed not a foot of land, nor could give his daughter any other portion than those perfections which nature had so abundantly bestowed: Margaret being esteemed superior in beauty to most women, and in mental capacity equal to most men.^b The Earl of Suffolk, a nobleman in the cardinal's interest, was despatched into France with proposals of marriage (1445), which were readily accepted: a secret article was inserted in the contract, providing for the restitution of Maine and Anjou,^c to the uncle of the

^a Hall.^b Pere d'Orleans.^c Fabian.

princess, Charles of Anjou, the favourite of the French king. When this concession was discovered, a few years after, it caused universal dissatisfaction.

F.—But Suffolk might foresee that these provinces could not long be retained by the English, and thence conclude, like a crafty politician, that their concession, which was unavoidable, would establish in him a claim to the lasting favour of the new queen.

P.—The beautiful scene then, in Shakspeare's play, where Suffolk leads in Margaret, is merely fictitious:

Be what thou wilt, thou art my prisoner.

F.—Of all the historical dramas of the great bard, the First Part of Henry the Sixth is that most likely to mislead the reader, as it sets at complete defiance the best attested dates and facts: the Second and Third Parts of Henry the Sixth are considerably more consonant with the truth of history.

A.—The first object of the queen, on her arrival, was to establish a complete ascendancy, which she found herself unable to effect, from the great popularity of the Duke of Gloucester, who had exercised the office of protector upwards of twenty years; his ruin was consequently resolved on, and the first attack was a prosecution of his duchess, who was accused of witchcraft. The duke having annulled his contract with Jacqueline of Hainault, had married, as Stow terms her, his wanton paramour, Eleanor Cobham, whose unseasonable ambition and pride induced her ruin. Dame Eleanor, for so she was universally called, dabbled in the art of magic; and she fell into a snare concocted by the cardinal, and the earl, now Duke of Suffolk, whose emissaries surprised her in company with one Margery Jourdan, a witch of Eye, and Roger Bolinbroke, a priest, melting a waxen image before a slow

fire, with the intention of causing Henry's force and vigour to waste by like insensible degrees.^a

F.—However absurd the accusation, it is very possible that the *malus animus* was not wanting on this occasion.

A.—The two confederates suffered the punishment of death, and Dame Eleanor was constrained to do public penance: on three several days she appeared in the most frequented streets of London with a wax taper in her hand, “hoodless, save a kerchief;”^b she was condemned also to suffer perpetual imprisonment in the Isle of Man. It is obvious what a mortification must have been inflicted on the Duke of Gloucester, heir presumptive to the throne, by such a proceeding. His enemies, apprehensive of his resentment, accused him of treason, in a parliament summoned at St. Edmundsbury; but afraid of bringing so popular a prince to trial, they judged it more expedient to murder him in his bed. In vain did the queen, the cardinal, and Suffolk, by exposing the body to public view, endeavour to induce a belief that his death was natural.^c

P.— Who finds the heifer dead and bleeding fresh,
And sees fast by a butcher with an axe,
But will suspect 'twas he that made the slaughter?
Who finds the partridge in the puttock's nest,
But may imagine how the bird was dead,
Although the kite soar with unbloodied beak?^d
Even so suspicious is this tragedy.

A.—The awful description in the same drama, of Humfrey's murdered corpse, tends to impress upon the memory the catastrophe of this imprudent but generous prince:

But see, his face is black and full of blood:
His eyeballs further out than when he lived,

^a Grafton.

^b Stow.

^c Cont. Hist. Croy. Hall. Grafton.

^d Hen. VI. Second Part.

Staring full ghastly like a strangled man ;
 His hair upreared ; his nostrils stretched with struggling ;
 His hands abroad displayed, as one that grasp'd
 And tugg'd for life, and was by strength subdued.
 Look on the sheets, his hair, you see, is sticking ;
 His well-proportioned beard made rough and rugged,
 Like to the summer's corn by tempest lodg'd.
 It cannot be, but he was murdered here :
 The least of all these signs is probable.^a

P.—The title of Duke of Gloucester was singularly unfortunate, the last prince who bore it perishing by similar violence at Calais.^b

F.—Gloucester is said to have received a better education than was common with princes in his age : he was certainly a patron of letters, and presented many valuable books to the University of Oxford, amongst which were some rare and curious Greek MSS.^c All these donations were finely written on vellum, and embellished with miniatures and illuminations : only a single specimen remains, a MS. in folio, of Valerius Maximus, the rest being destroyed by the pious visitors of the University in the reign of Edward the Sixth, whose zeal or avarice was excited by the splendid covers stamped with a crucifix, which gave the books the appearance of missals.^d

A.—The duke had made so great a progress in philosophy, as to be aware that a man born blind and suddenly restored to sight could be no true judge of colours.^e The mode in which he cured the lameness of an impostor, called Simcox, who pretended to have received his sight by a miracle, forms the subject of a laughable and characteristic scene in the same forecited drama of Shakspeare.

F.—The quaint Fuller^f says, “ that the memory of Gloucester is pendulous between malefactor and mar-

^a Henry VI. Second Part, act 3.

^b See page 185.

^c Ant. & Wood.

^d Warton, Hist. Eng. Poetry, vol. 2.

^e Grafton.

^f Church Hist.

tyr, but the latter hath prevailed, and he is usually termed the Good;* as for those who, chewing their meat with their feet whilst they walk in the body of St. Paul's, are commonly said to dine with Duke Humfrey, the saying is as far from truth as they from their dinner, even twenty miles off, since this duke was buried at St. Albans."

A.—There is surely something offensive to a just taste, in coupling together, for the sake of a jingling antithesis, the epithet malefactor with the name of the good Duke Humfrey, as this prince, however rash and headstrong, has never been suspected of entertaining the remotest design against the honour or welfare of his country. His rival in power, Cardinal Beaufort, did not long survive, dying six weeks after his nephew (April 11, 1447).

P.—The death-bed of this lofty churchman has also been rendered immortal by the description of our great poet:

Lord Cardinal, if thou think'st on heaven's bliss,
Hold up thy hand, make signal of thy hope:
He dies and makes no sign.^b

A.—Whether the cardinal either authorised or was concerned in Gloucester's murder, is uncertain, though the fact is strongly suspected: he certainly concurred in the accusation of treason. Beaufort was doubtless a prelate of an "unbounded stomach," able, artful, and intriguing; of insatiable avarice, and enormous pride. Like many others elevated to equal dignities, and possessing so unreasonable a proportion of the good things of this world, he became unwilling to leave them: the striking picture of his death-bed horror and despair, is probably an exaggeration of the poet; but the old

* Fabian.

^b Shaks. Hen. VI. part 2.

chronicler Hall relates that the cardinal exclaimed, "Why should I die, having so much riches? if the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by riches to buy it. Fy; will not death be hired? and can money do nothing?"

F.—Yet the cardinal must have been eighty years of age:

So bad a death argues a monstrous life.

A.—Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all,*

is a remark as judicious in itself as characteristic of its pious and royal speaker. These tragic scenes sufficiently concur, in point of time, with the final loss of the French provinces, as to conclude the first act, if we may so call it, of the reign of Henry the Sixth.

* Shaks. Hen. VI. part 2.

DISSERTATION X.

SECTION IV.

HENRY VI. - - - A.D. 1450 to 1461.

A.—THE weakness and incapacity of Henry, as well as the domineering disposition of the queen, became every day more apparent; and it is difficult to say which quality proved most detrimental to the interest of the nation. An universal discontent prevailed, which first assumed a formidable shape in the impeachment, by the Commons, of the Duke of Suffolk, Margaret's declared favourite, who, to please a foreign mistress, was said to have betrayed his sovereign, and to have sacrificed the inheritance of the crown, in delivering up the provinces of Anjou and Maine: he was first accused of treason,^a on grounds most improbable, not to say ridiculous, which, as they could not be proved, were changed into various charges of political misdemeanour. Henry endeavoured to save Suffolk from the effect of this prosecution, by banishing him the kingdom for five years; but the enemies of Suffolk, sensible that he would be recalled and reinstated in favour with the first opportunity, employed the captain of a ship called the Nicholas of the Tower, to intercept him in his passage to France: he was accordingly seized near Dover, his head struck off on the side of a longboat, and his body thrown into the ocean.^b

P.—But surely this act was as atrocious and illegal as any that Suffolk had committed.

^a Cotton's Abridgm.^b Hist. Croy. Cont.

A.—That Suffolk perished without a shadow of law is obvious; but the authors of the outrage were never with certainty ascertained: he was received on the deck of the vessel with the ominous salutation of "Welcome, traitor;" a mock trial took place before the sailors; and it was not till the sixth stroke that his head was severed from his body by a rusty axe.^a

F.—Such was the end of William de la Pole, an unprincipled minister, without doubt, and not at all nice about the means by which he upheld his power; yet this man, with his hands embrued with the blood of the Duke of Gloucester, could write, on the day of his departure, a letter to his son, strongly inculcating principles of religion and loyalty:^b so much easier is it to bestow good advice than to afford a correct example.

A.—The king and queen were plunged into the deepest distress at the news of Suffolk's death; nor was their anxiety at all diminished by the rumour that a pretender to the crown, in the person of the Duke of York, was beginning to prefer his latent but powerful claim: and the queen found by a righteous doom, that her guilty concurrence in Gloucester's death, had removed the strongest support of the throne. One John Cade, a native of Ireland, a man of low condition, assumed the name of Mortimer, long feared and hated by the House of Lancaster, intending to pass himself for the son of a Sir John Mortimer, executed in the beginning of this reign for high treason. Cade, as it is supposed, was instigated by the partizans of the Duke of York (who was at this time subduing an insurrection of the Irish), for the purpose of sounding the opinions of the people, and arousing their feelings. He was

^a Fenn. Paston Letters, vol. 1.

^b Ibid.

nicknamed John Amendall;^a and twenty thousand of the common people of Kent flocked to his standard on Blackheath, for the purpose of petitioning the court for a redress of grievances. They defeated a small force sent against them under Sir Humfrey Stafford,^b whom they killed, and with whose gorgeous armour, Cade arrayed himself. After murdering Lord Saye, the treasurer, and Sir James Cromer, the sheriff of Kent,^c Cade marched into the metropolis, and striking his sword against London Stone, he exclaimed, "Now is Mortimer lord of the city."^d His followers at length committed such havoc, that the citizens, seconded by a detachment of soldiers from the Tower, fell upon them, and destroyed a considerable number; the remainder, by a judicious proclamation of pardon from the Archbishop of Canterbury,^e dispersed. Many of the ringleaders were afterwards executed; Cade escaped the immediate danger; and after wandering about the wooded country near Lewes for several days, was killed by Alexander Iden, a gentleman of Sussex, a price having been set upon his head.^f

F.—It is proper to distinguish the nature of this insurrection from that of Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, seventy years before, which seems to have been caused by the real and overwhelming grievances endured by the people, and which extended nearly over the whole of the kingdom; but in the present tumult the county of Kent alone took part, and there can be little doubt that it was a contrivance of the Yorkists. Shakspeare's exhibition of the affair is highly characteristic;^g and indeed it may be observed, that his *Second Part of Henry the Sixth*, or at least the first four acts, display

^a Stow.^e Hall.^b Hall.^f Rymer, vol. 10.^c Ibid.^g Hen. VI. Second Part.^d Fabian.

the events of the reign with considerable correctness and inimitable force.

A.—The court now became fully aware of its danger from the pretensions of the Duke of York; and the duke was equally aware of the danger to which his title to the crown exposed him, and which, but for the general discontent, would have silently worn away and been forgotten. His situation was painfully embarrassing: originally unwilling to have disturbed the possession of Henry, but becoming sensible of the impossibility of remaining in a private station, he was compelled to embrace measures which his mild and moderate disposition would have preferred to avoid.

P.—You have not explained the exact nature of the claim of the Duke of York to the throne of England.

A.—You will find it a dry piece of genealogy, but yet necessary to be understood. Lionel, duke of Clarence, third son of Edward the Third, left an only daughter, Philippa, married to Mortimer, earl of Marche: their posterity became the undoubted heirs of Richard the Second. When the males of the house of Mortimer failed, the right devolved upon Anne, sister of Edmund, the last earl of Marche: this lady married the Earl of Cambridge, beheaded in the late reign; she transmitted her claim to her son Richard, now Duke of York; and this prince plainly stood in the succession before the house of Lancaster, which derived its descent from John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward the Third. But in the genealogy of the house of York, there was a sort of family puzzle, their male descent being derived from Edward of Langley, fifth son of Edward the Third; consequently, though they stood above the house of Lancaster by their female pedigree, they fell below it as a male branch of the Plantagenet family.

P.—The two houses found themselves at this juncture somewhat similarly situated as the families of Hanover and Stuart in the last century, though the quarrel terminated in an opposite result.

F.—The house of Lancaster pleaded a parliamentary establishment and fifty years' possession; notwithstanding, it is certain that strict lawyers must always have viewed its assumption of the crown as an usurpation, it being neither according to the letter nor the spirit of the ancient constitution.

A.—Yet, what between the plea of fifty years established authority on one hand, and the right of blood on the other, the most conscientious persons became divided in their sentiments: one party considering the Duke of York as an injured prince, deprived of his right; the other as a traitor, who under specious pretences sought the throne. And even at this great distance of time, as an abstract question, it is difficult to bestow our suffrage: the dispute involved no point, either civil or religious, by which the condition of the people was to be benefited, further than by the character of the rival princes; and expediency only therefore could form a rational ground of decision. But as the nation seems to have been equally divided in its opinion, who was able to point out on which side the expediency lay? Fortunately, in the parallel modern case, the difference of religion drew a marked and intelligible line, sufficiently powerful to determine a large majority of the nation, in a conjuncture so difficult and painful.

F.—It is curious to observe how tenderly Blackstone* treads over the concealed embers in his days; when speaking of the revolution, he places the obliga-

* Book 1, cap. 31.

tion of submitting to its provisions on the simple ground of obeying established authority.

A.—At the death of Suffolk, Edmund Beaufort, duke of Somerset, succeeded to his place in the administration; and as he was the person under whose government the French provinces had been lost, he became equally odious. The House of Commons presenting a petition for his removal,^a which was refused by the court, gave an occasion for the Duke of York to raise a force of ten thousand men, at the head of which he marched towards London, demanding a reformation in the government. By dexterous management the duke was ensnared into the hands of the court,^b and his designs for the present frustrated. The nation however continued in great discontent, and whilst in this disposition, the queen was delivered of a son (1454); no joyful incident, as it removed all hope of the peaceable succession of the duke and his family at the demise of Henry.

F.—This birth of a prince was a singular coincidence with the same circumstance previous to the revolution in 1688, which equally precluded all prospect of accommodation; and what is remarkable, this infant^c was imagined (like that of James's), by several persons to be supposititious.

A.—Henry, always unfit to exercise the powers of royalty, a few days before the birth of his son, fell into a distemper which deprived him of all understanding; he lost both sense and memory, and the use of his limbs.^d Thus there existed a total deficiency of the executive authority, without the throne becoming vacant.

F.—This crisis naturally recalls to our memory the same deficiency existing in modern days, of which afflicting dispensation it forms the only real precedent.

^a Hall.

^b Ibid.

^c Fabian.

^d Whethamstedc.

A.—Parliament now assumed very high ground. As it was necessary that some person should be at the head of the government, it appointed the Duke of York protector, with many limitations,^a carefully providing for his resignation, in the event of the king's recovery, or when the infant Prince of Wales should arrive at years of discretion; thus plainly declaring its intention of adhering to the family on the throne. Henry remained above a twelvemonth before his disorder left him: when the queen presented to him the royal infant, he asked his name; she told him Edward. The king then held up his hands, and thanked God: he declared that he had not known the child till that time, nor any thing that had been said to him, nor where he had been during his illness. The protectorship of the Duke of York was now annulled, being framed to cease with the malady to which it owed its creation;^c and he became so much alarmed for his safety, that having retired to the borders of Wales, he levied an army, and under the old pretext of redressing grievances, marched towards London, when meeting with the king's forces near St. Albans, a battle ensued, May 22, 1454, in which the Yorkists were superior, and without suffering any material loss, slew five thousand of their opponents,^d amongst whom were the Duke of Somerset, and many other persons of distinction. The king himself fell into the hands of the Duke of York, who treated him with much respect and tenderness.

F.—Such then was the commencement of this fatal quarrel, which was signalised by twelve pitched battles, in which one hundred thousand human beings were slaughtered, which cost the lives of eighty persons having the royal blood in their veins, and almost annihilated the ancient nobility of England.

^a Rot. Parl. vol. 4.

^b Penn. Paston Letters. vol. 1.

^c Rot. Parl. vol. 5.

^d Whethamstedc.

P.—Did the great body of the nation, in this sanguinary conflict, compel its voice to be heard through the medium of the House of Commons?

A.—*Inter arma silent leges.* It is remarkable how sensibly the power of parliament diminished after the sword was once drawn. The deficient title of the Lancastrian princes had elevated the House of Commons into an authority which it had never before obtained: and during their sway its increased importance was evinced by various statutes regulating the election of its members. Whether freeholders under *mesne* lords originally exercised the elective franchise equally with the king's tenants in chief, or whether they gradually acquired the privilege, is uncertain;* but at the present period their right was universally admitted: and in some counties the voters had become so numerous and acted so disorderly, that it was thought expedient to restrict, by two statutes, the 8 and 10 Hen. VI. the qualification of voting to the possession of a freehold amounting to forty shillings annual value, without deduction. The members for counties were directed, by another statute, 23 Hen. VI. to be "discreet knights resident in the county; or if knights were not to be found, notable squires, or gentlemen by birth, having an estate qualifying them to be made knights;" which estate was forty pounds per annum; "but by no means any yeoman, or person of inferior rank." The members for cities and boroughs were, by a statute of the last reign, 1 Hen. V. directed to be such persons who actually resided in the cities and boroughs which they represented; the writs direct not only the wisest but the stoutest men to be chosen,† that they might be able to endure the fatigues of parliament. The mode of electing members varied at different places, and custom long continued became law.

* Blackstone, Tracts.

† Prynne, Brev. Parl. Rediv.

F.—Surprising irregularities however prevailed. The return of the knights of the shire was influenced then, as well as now, by the great men of the time. The members for the county of York, for near fifty years, seem to have been chosen by the attorneys of some powerful lords and ladies.^a The Commons even complained that the sheriffs returned members who had not been elected;^b and an act was passed, 7 Hen. IV. for their better regulation.

A.—The wages of the members, four shillings per day for the knights, and two shillings for the burgesses, continued the same as when first regulated; and the number of the House of Commons remained about three hundred, nearly the same as in the parliament summoned in the twenty-third year of Edward the First: for though some boroughs had neglected to return members, their place was supplied by others.

F.—That universal suffrage did not prevail, is sufficiently evident. The advocates for annual parliaments have somewhat a better ground to stand upon: two statutes, the 4 and 6 of Edw. III. had declared that a parliament should be held “every year once, and more if need be;” and from this time there appears to have been few interruptions to an annual session, till the unfortunate confusion of affairs occasioned by the civil wars; and the practice being once discontinued, succeeding monarchs declined its revival. In the reign of Edward the Fourth, there were intervals of two, three, and even four years, in which no parliament was held at all.^c

A.—From the expression in the statute of Edward the Third, some vehement sticklers of popular rights have concluded, that not only a parliament was held

^a Pryune, Brev. Parl. Rediv.

^b Rot. Parl. vol. 4, p. 511.

^c Parl. Hist. vol. 2.

every year, but that a new one was annually chosen, and that prorogations were unknown. This doctrine is however not admissible: so early as the 28th of Edward the First, the same members met after a prorogation;* and if the king had the power of proroguing parliament to a second session, what should have prevented him from continuing the same parliament to a third? which truly was the case in the seventh year of Henry the Fourth, and the twenty-third and thirty-first of Henry the Sixth. Indeed there appears to have been no necessary termination of a parliament at any time, except by the demise of the sovereign.

F.—It does however oddly enough happen, that no parliament, till the twenty-third and thirty-first of Henry the Sixth, had ever continued in being, whether sitting in one session or more, for the full period of twelve calendar months. Thus for a hundred and fifty years, from the first summons of the Commons by Edward the First, annual parliaments in this sense had actually prevailed.

A.—But the circumstance must be accounted for, not from the want of power in the king to continue the sittings, but from the anxiety of the members to be released from their attendance; a seat in the House of Commons being considered, in the earlier period of its existence, as a burden which few men were willing to undertake, and from which every one was desirous of escaping as soon as possible, like jurymen of the present day. When a seat became an object of ambition, as conferring power or profit, the members were easily induced to extend their service, and thus parliaments gradually became of longer duration.

P.—The qualification of a freeholder to vote being regulated at forty shillings annual value, are we to con-

* Pryne, *Parl. Writs*, part 4.

sider that an estate of that amount enabled its possessor to provide a decent living?

A.—The American mines being yet undiscovered, the proportion between the weight of the precious metals and the quantity of commodities which they would purchase, continued nearly the same as they had remained since the Conquest; but it is to be remarked that an alteration had now taken place in the English coinage: Edward the Third, instead of the practice of coining twenty shillings to the pound Tower weight, had increased the number to twenty-five; and Henry the Fifth, proceeding still further, had coined thirty shillings from the pound weight. So that at the time of passing this act (1429), for the regulation of freehold voters, a shilling contained only double its present weight, instead of triple, as heretofore; consequently the intrinsic worth of forty shillings, according to our scale of valuation, as explained in the reign of Edward the Second,^a would be equivalent to forty pounds modern.

F.—Whether it would be for the benefit of the community that the spirit, instead of the letter of this enactment were now enforced, especially in Ireland, I leave others to determine.

A.—After the victory of St. Albans, it is strange that the Duke of York still made no formal pretensions to the crown, but merely reclaimed the protectorship,^b of which he was again speedily deprived, by Margaret producing her husband in parliament, who declared his intention of resuming the government.^c The duke was compelled to acquiesce, and a pretended reconciliation followed; the chief parties, with an hypocrisy truly ridiculous, went in a solemn procession to St. Paul's, the Duke of

^a Page 67.

^b Rymer, vol. 11.

^c *Ibid.*

York leading Queen Margaret, and a leader of the one party marching hand in hand with a leader of the opposite.^a

P.—Though, like the two kings of Brentford, they might walk hand in hand, they certainly did not smell at the same nosegay.

A.—This seeming harmony lasted a very short period: about six months after, one of the king's retinue insulting a retainer of the Earl of Warwick, a fierce quarrel ensued, and became so general, that the earl, apprehending his life to be aimed at, fled to his government at Calais.^b

F.—This Earl of Warwick was Richard Neville, who became so famous afterwards by the title of the King Maker; he was nephew to the Duchess of York, and having married the heiress of the great Beauchamp family, earls of Warwick, he acquired their immense possessions; and from his personal qualities, his magnificence, hospitality, and gallantry in the field, added to his unlimited wealth, he acquired so great a degree of power and popularity, as would have excited jealousy under any government.

A.—A battle took place, 23d September, 1459, at Bloreheath, in Shropshire, between the Earl of Salisbury, who was advancing to join the Duke of York; and Lord Audley on the part of the king, in which the Yorkists, by judicious generalship, were victorious.^c But this victory decided nothing; for the Earl of Warwick, hastening to the general rendezvous at Ludlow, was deserted by Sir Andrew Trollope, commanding a band of veterans; this officer discovering that it was the duke's intention to depose Henry.^d

^a Hall.

^c Whethamstede.

^b Ibid.

^d Hall.

P.—But surely the knight must wilfully have shut his eyes, if this was his first discovery of the design of the Duke of York.

A.—This incident compelled the Yorkists to disperse, and the duke fled to Ireland. The next year however, the Earl of Warwick again appeared from Calais, with the young Earl of Marche, eldest son of the Duke of York: they were joyfully received at London. In a short time a battle took place near Northampton, 10th July, 1460, in which the Lancastrians were totally routed, and the king once more taken prisoner.* The Duke of York arriving from Ireland, now summoned a parliament, and for the first time formally stated his claim to the throne. He deduced his title from the priority of his descent, enlarged upon the cruelty and injustice by which the house of Lancaster had attained the sovereign power, and detailed the calamities which had attended the reign of the present monarch. The proceedings of the assembly are curious and interesting: the Lords remaining in suspense, the duke advanced near the royal canopy, and laid his right hand on the cushion, seeming to expect an invitation to place himself on the throne like that which was given to Henry the Fourth. In this he was disappointed: a solemn silence pervaded the house for some minutes: at length the Archbishop of Canterbury asked him if he would go with him, and wait upon the king; to which the duke, in great agitation, replied, "I know no person to whom I owe that mark of respect;" and immediately hurried out of the house.^b

F.—Such a degree of moderation in such a crisis is almost unparalleled; and the Peers, with all imaginable coolness, took the subject into consideration for six

* Whethamstede.

^b Ibid.

successive days, with no greater tumult than commonly attended an ordinary debate.

A.—As most of the peers had received grants of some sort from the house of Lancaster, they were probably afraid of invalidating their titles by a too sudden renunciation of the rights of that family; and they entered into a compromise that Henry should retain the crown during life, the administration however to remain with the Duke of York, who was acknowledged the true and lawful heir of the monarchy.^a

P.—This was nearly the arrangement agreed on by the barons between Henry the Second and King Stephen; but which the death of that usurper alone prevented from ending in a civil war.

A.—It was hardly to be expected that Queen Margaret would consent to sacrifice the claims of the young Prince of Wales, her son. Henry for himself would have felt small reluctance, though he once plucked up sufficient spirit to observe to the Peers, “My father was king; his father was also a king; I have worn the crown forty years, from my cradle, you have all sworn fealty to me as your sovereign, and your fathers have done the like to my fathers, how then can my right be disputed.”^b Queen Margaret, after the defeat at Northampton, having fled to the north, with admirable spirit, vigour, and address, raised there an army, and soon appeared with considerable power. To oppose her, the Duke of York threw himself into Sandal Castle, near Wakefield, and unadvisedly giving battle with a far inferior force, was totally defeated and slain^c (24th December, 1460).

^a Whethamstede.

^b Joannis Blakman, apud Hearne in Otterbourne.

^c Whethamstede.

P.—This is the first reverse which the Yorkists experienced in the field of battle.

A.—The duke, though deficient in political courage, possessed great personal bravery: he was indignant at taking shelter behind the walls of a castle, lest he should be thought to give the victory to a woman; which nonsensical notion led to his ruin, as his son, the Earl of Marche, was bringing up a force to his assistance from Wales. The circumstances of the duke's death were very tragical. Being taken prisoner, he was made to stand upon a molehill, where his enemies, having placed a garland of bullrushes upon his head, in derision kneeled before him, saying, "Hail, king without rule; hail, king without heritage; hail, duke and prince, without people or possessions:"^a having thus put him to scorn, they struck off his head, which was stuck upon a pole, and presented to Queen Margaret. The Earl of Rutland, the duke's second son, a beautiful youth of seventeen, being removed from the field by his tutor, attracted by his splendid apparel the observation of Lord Clifford, who enquired who he was? The young nobleman being dismayed did not speak a word, but knelt down, as imploring mercy. "Save him," said the chaplain, "for he is a prince's son, and peradventure he may do you good hereafter." At this explanation, "the black-faced barbarian," as Shakspeare calls him, exclaimed, "By God's blood! thy father slew mine, and so will I slay thee, and all thy kin!" and immediately killed the youthful prince with his sword.^b

P.—All the nobility who were taken by either party in these sanguinary contests, seem to have been universally slaughtered or conducted to the scaffold: a

^a Whethamstede.

^b Hall.

practice which places in no very favourable view the humanity of the English in those times.

F.—A nearer parallel than might be suspected may possibly be found in the annals of the same people, of a much later age.

A.—The head of the Duke of York, encircled with a paper crown, was placed upon the walls of the city of York.^a This prince, who was greatly and justly lamented by his own party, perished at the age of fifty. Of somewhat an irresolute disposition, he appears to have been too conscientious and good a man to contend with those obstacles which beset the acquisition of a crown, and deficient in that harsh and decided fierceness which has placed a diadem on the heads of so many tyrants.

F.—No person was ever so near a throne, and yet not seated on it.

A.—Queen Margaret now exerted herself with uncommon spirit: she separated her army into two divisions, one of which she led towards London, and the other she despatched into Wales, under Jasper Tudor, earl of Pembroke, half-brother to the king, to oppose the Earl of Marche, now become, by the death of his father, Duke of York. This army was defeated, with great slaughter, at Mortimer's Cross, in Herefordshire, by the young duke^b (February 2, 1461).

F.—It was before this battle that the strange phenomenon of the sun appearing like three suns, and then suddenly uniting into one, took place, and encouraged Edward in his attack.^c Such optical illusions are frequently mentioned by the old chroniclers, as occurring in these ages.

A.—The omen turned out very favourably for the

^a Hall.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

Yorkists. The Earl of Pembroke saved himself by flight; but his father, Owen Tudor, was taken prisoner, and soon after beheaded,* on the shameful pretence of retaliating the death of the Duke of York.

F.—This personage was said to be descended from Cadwallader, the last of the British kings; and he is remembered from his rare fortune in marrying Katherine of France, the dowager of Henry the Fifth. His introduction to her notice, if not to her affections, was singular: being remarkable for the beauty of his person, he was “commanded to dance before the queen; in a turn, not being able to recover himself, he fell into her lap, as she sat upon a little stool, with many of her ladies about her.”^b This marriage gave great offence; and Mr. Tudor, as Dr. Henry calls him, was, after the queen’s death, which happened in 1437, committed to the Tower, under pretence of contempt against the royal prerogative; but he was soon permitted to escape. The grandson of this gentleman, Henry the Seventh, ascending the throne, has given the name of Owen Tudor a lasting celebrity.

A.—Queen Margaret met with better success than Pembroke. As she advanced towards London, she defeated a considerable force of Lancastrians at St. Albans (Feb. 17); where she had the pleasure of seeing the redoubted Earl of Warwick fly before her conquering arms, and of rescuing her husband from captivity.^d This was of small consequence to Henry, as he was equally a prisoner in the hands of either party; nor did the victory produce any advantage to the queen: her troops, intent on plunder, were repulsed in an attempt upon the metropolis, which city always appears to have favored the York faction; and she was compelled to retire

* Hall. ^b Drayton, Heroical Epistles. ^c Rymer, vol. 10.

the north. The young Duke of York uniting his forces with the Earl of Warwick, entered the capital^a amidst the acclamations of the citizens. The person of this prince, now of the age of nineteen, was so eminently handsome as to have considerable effect in advancing his interests; the city dames in particular, being so delighted with his appearance, his spirit, and affability, that he found himself entirely possessed of the public favour; and wisely judging that half measures could be of no avail in his situation, he boldly determined to assume the name and dignity of king. But some appearance of national consent being thought necessary, Edward, afraid of calling a parliament, ordered his soldiers to muster in Saint John's Fields. As great numbers of persons assembled to behold them, Lord Falconbridge asked the people if they would have Henry to reign over them any longer? "No, no," was the welcome reply.^b He then demanded if they would have Edward, eldest son of the late Duke of York, for their king? They expressed their assent by loud and joyful acclamations. The voice of the people could be no other than the voice of God. A great number of bishops, lords, and persons of distinction, then met at Baynard's Castle,^c ratified the popular election, and the new king was proclaimed the next day by the title of Edward the Fourth.

F.—This seems to be the nearest approach to an elective sovereignty that has ever been exhibited in England.

A.—Thus ended, after thirty-nine years continuance, the reign of Henry the Sixth, the only crowned king of France and England. He saw all the conquests and dominions of his family,

^a Ibid.

except Calais, entirely lost to the English crown; and this was far from being the greatest misfortune which the nation suffered from his deplorable imbecility. The civil war produced more distress and calamity than any event of a similar nature ever recorded in this, or perhaps in any other kingdom: dissension pervaded every family in England; it spared neither the convents of the monks nor the cottages of the poor, without the expectation of any benefit being elicited, or any principle established, by the triumph of either party; nor was it shaking off the yoke of a tyrant, since the public records do not inform us of any greater violations of the laws than were commonly practised by the ministers of the crown in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. It is true that the loss of the French provinces had soured the temper of the people; but the son of Henry was as likely to retrieve the honour of the nation as the son of the Duke of York. The ancient though melancholy deduction from the contests of the great was never more truly exemplified:

Quicquid delirant reges plectuntur Aohivi.

DISSERTATION XI.

Crosby House, London.

**THE HOUSE OF PLANTAGENET,
CONTINUED.**

THE LINE OF YORK.

EDWARD IV.	- - - - -	A.D. 1461.
EDWARD V.	- - - - -	— 1483.
RICHARD III.	- - - - -	— 1483.

SECTION I.

A.—THE widely desolating fire of London sufficiently accounts for the small number of antiquities which remain within the precincts of that city; which circumstance, however the curious may deplore, posterity has daily occasion to bless, as it removed one of the most frightful collection of dwellings ever inhabited by human beings.

F.—The panegyric of honest John Stow would lead to somewhat a different conclusion, London being, as he says, “ the largest city in extent, and the fairest built, the most populous and best inhabited, and that

by a civil, rich, and sober people, of any in the world."^a

A.—Admitting that some of the churches and other public buildings possessed a portion of magnificence, yet from the ill-arranged plan in which ancient houses, both externally and internally, were constructed, we may safely conclude that few uglier cities existed than old London.

P.—It would be interesting to trace the progress of domestic architecture in England through its gradations, from the rude hut of the ancient Briton to the lordly castle of Windsor, and the splendid palaces of Blenheim and Hampton Court.

A.—The dwellings of the ancient Britons were wretched cottages of a circular form, with a tapering roof, covered with straw, at the top of which was an aperture for the smoke to escape;^b the walls were wattled, and the chinks filled with clay to exclude the cold; they were then whitewashed. Cæsar says^c they much resembled the houses of the Gauls. Specimens of such *tuguria* may yet be seen in the Highlands of Scotland.

P.—When the Romans obtained dominion, we conclude that they introduced their own forms of architecture.

A.—We have still vestiges of their magnificence in the beautiful tessellated pavements occasionally discovered. The Roman houses seem to have covered a large portion of ground, and to have consisted only of the basement story, as this was the fashion of Italy. In what manner the British towns were constructed during this period, we are left in the dark; but that they aspired to splendour, we may conclude from the

^a Survey.

^b Diod. Sic. lib. 5.

^c De Bel. Gal. lib. 5.

description in Tacitus^a of the temples, theatre, and other public edifices at Camalodunum. All the Roman refinement was destroyed during the Saxon era; and the houses of the new invaders seem to have been as rude as their manners, being little better than hovels of wood or earth, covered on the top with straw or the branches of trees.^b

P.—Yet the Normans were great builders.

A.—True; but the ancient barons resided in castles constructed for defence, not for comfort, and dreary enough they were. Common dwelling-houses, long after the Conquest, appear to have been built of wood, and covered with straw or reeds; even in London and other great towns, there were few chimneys or glass windows before the age of the Tudors.^c When defence became unnecessary, though the baron no longer constructed his dwelling as a fortress, and the mansion was embattled only for ornament; yet it contained many features of the old baronial castle, such as turrets, drawbridges, moats, tower-gateways, thick walls, and small windows; and though incapable of real defence, it was still destitute of all elegance or convenience. One of the most perfect specimens of this age now remaining, is Haddon Hall, in Derbyshire, a seat of the Duke of Rutland, began in 1427. Of somewhat later date is Oxburgh Hall, in Norfolk, belonging to the Bedingfield family, and built in the reign of Edward the Fourth, having a fine tower-gateway, with brick turrets eighty feet high. Some of these mansions contained a vast combination of ill-matched rooms, put together as if they had been added at various times, and by accident.

P.—These specimens, as well as Crosby House, having been the residence of men of rank, afford no

^a Annal. lib. 14.

^b Cluver. Antiq. Germ.

^c Holinshed. Introduction.

correct notion of the houses of persons of moderate condition.

A.—A common sized house in the country, about the time of the wars of the Roses, was built of wood, and the interstices of the walls filled with clay, or covered with lath and plaister: a porch was a usual ornament, and the house contained one large and spacious parlour. Conveniency was however generally sacrificed to show. The ceilings were low, and little attention paid to ventilation, which was the principal cause of the unhealthiness which prevailed in large cities.

F.—But the sluttishness of ancient housewives, which was supreme, might be another cause; the floors being strewed, says Erasmus, in his time, with rushes, under which “lay unmolested, an ancient collection of beer, grease, fragments, bones, spittle, excrements of dogs and cats, and every thing that was nasty.”^a

A.—In towns the houses were constructed with the same materials as in the country: the upper stories so much projecting over each other, that in lofty dwellings, and in narrow streets, they excluded light and air from the thronged thoroughfare below, though they afforded to the inhabitants an opportunity of conversing with their opposite neighbours, or even of shaking hands in a familiar greeting, across the way.

F.—Though these buildings contained an enormous quantity of timber, they were not calculated for an equal duration with the brick houses in the towns of Flanders, still so picturesque and venerable.

A.—Consequently few domestic edifices of the fifteenth century remain. Crosby Place was constructed with stone; but though once spacious and elegant, the residence of princes, it is now converted into a ware-

^a Epis. 432.

house: nor has the notice of Shakspeare been able to protect it from neglect and depredation; twice has the poet mentioned it, in perhaps the most popular of all his plays, *Richard the Third*, as the residence of the Duke of Gloucester, who desires the lady Anne

..... to leave these sad designs,
And presently repair to Crosby Place.

P.—These remains, situated on the eastern side of Bishopsgate Street, are so environed by houses as to be nearly indiscernible.

A.—They consist of a spacious hall, with two adjoining apartments. In the hall is an oriel or bay-window, of great height and beautiful proportion: there is a sufficiency of ornament remaining to show that the apartment must have been even elegant as well as splendid; but there is nothing in its architectural merit to require particular elucidation; it is miserably disfigured by an additional floor, but is still interesting, from its association with various personages by whom it has been inhabited: as the rich Sir John Spencer,* who kept his mayoralty here in 1594; the celebrated Duke of Sully occupied it, when ambassador from the French king, Henry the Fourth, to James the First. The building itself is one of the most ancient specimens of domestic architecture in the metropolis, being erected by Sir John Crosby, a wealthy citizen, and afterwards sheriff of London (1466), the fifth year of the reign of Edward the Fourth.^b

P.—In the sculptural ornaments of Crosby House, we observe no roses, as in King's College Chapel. At what period of the civil wars did the rival houses assume the white and red rose as their badge? and what indeed gave occasion to their choosing those flowers as the emblem of party distinction.

* Stow, Survey.

^b Ibid.

F.—It was the custom of the nobility for several centuries to give their retainers a badge or cognizance, by which they should be distinguished; which was sometimes the crest of the family, and sometimes a device, according to the fancy of the bestower. That of Richard the Second was a white hart couchant, with a crown and chain about his neck, the crest of the Holand family, his half-brothers, for wearing which after his deposition many lost their lives. Edward the Fourth gave a sun with rays, which won him the battle of Barnet, the Lancastrians mistaking it for the Earl of Oxford's star. The Earl of Warwick's famous bear and ragged staff, was both the crest and cognizance of that nobleman. Camden^a tells us that the badge of Edmund Crouchback, earl of Lancaster, second son of Henry the Third, was a red rose; which was adopted by John of Gaunt, who married the heiress of that prince, and so obtained his vast possessions. Edmund Crouchback's once magnificent tomb in Westminster Abbey is profusely adorned, not with roses indeed, but with red cinquefoils,^b a near resemblance. The same authority also (Camden), says that Edmund of Langley, fifth son of Edward the Third, took the white rose as his device, not from any hostile disposition to his brother, but merely as a distinction.

A.—The tomb of Edmund, in Langley Church, is consequently ornamented with a frieze of quatrefoils, sculptured in alabaster.^c

P.—The scene then in the First Part of Henry the Sixth, in which Shakspeare introduces Richard Plantagenet, as vindicating his descent against the taunts of the Duke of Somerset, does not exhibit the origin of these fatal symbols, though it has frequently been so represented :

^a Remains. Impresses.

^b Gough, Sepulchral Monuments.

^c Ibid.

Planta.—Let him that is a true born gentleman,
And stands upon the honour of his birth,
If he suppose that I have pleaded truth,
From off this briar pluck a white rose with me.

Somerset.—Let him that is no coward, nor no flatterer,
But dare maintain the party of the truth,
Pluck a red rose from off this thorn with me.*

F.—What was the legal opinion of the age may be gathered from the lawyer's address to Somerset:

Unless my study and my books be false,
The argument you held was wrong in you;
In sign whereof I pluck a white rose too.

A.—The young Duke of York, now Edward the Fourth, having, by a tumultuary election of his own faction, assumed the regal title, exerted himself with great activity to secure its continuance: bold and enterprising, he was precisely of the fit stamp to encounter the havoc and devastation of a civil war; his hardness of heart rendering him impregnable to any weakness of compassion which might injure or delay his cause.

F.—The first instance which he gave of his cruelty, was the well-known story of his executing one Walter Walker, a grocer of London, for saying that he would make his son heir to the crown, meaning his shop, which was distinguished by that sign; his speech being interpreted as a derision of Edward's title.^b

A.—The success of Queen Margaret in the second battle of St. Albans was of little benefit: denied an entrance to London, she returned to the north, where she collected a considerable army; thither Edward, disdaining to waste his time in the amusement of the metropolis, together with the Earl of Warwick, promptly followed. A skirmish took place at Ferrybridge, which is no other-

* Act 2, scene 4.

^b Stow.

wise remarkable, than that the earl, apprehensive of defeat, and willing to inspire confidence, ordered his horse to be brought, which he stabbed before the whole army, and kissing the hilt of his sword, swore that he was determined to share the fate of the meanest soldier.^a But on the next day, Palm Sunday, March 29th, 1461, was fought at Towton, ten miles from York, the bloodiest engagement which took place during the civil wars. Whilst the Yorkists were advancing to the charge, a fall of snow drove furiously in the faces of their enemies, and blinded them. This advantage was improved by a stratagem: orders were given to a body of archers to send a volley of arrows, and then to retire; the Lancastrians, supposing that they were within reach of their opponents, discharged all their arrows, which thus fell short of the foe, and did no execution.^b But the bow was soon laid aside, and the sword decided the combat: victory declared for the Yorkists. No less than thirty-six thousand persons fell, either in the battle or the pursuit, no quarter being given on either side.^c

F.—To account for the sanguinary nature of these contests, we must recollect that they were fought by an unbridled populace, who combated hand to hand with a fierceness proceeding from personal hatred, of which there are few examples in troops fighting for pay. The appearance of the field of battle, for the space of ten miles, presented an appalling spectacle of human carnage, mingled with the snow.^d

A.—Henry and Margaret, with their young son, fled to Scotland. Edward returned to London, where

^a Hall.

^b Ibid.

^c Cont. Hist. Croy. Whethamstede.

^d Cont. Hist. Croy.

he was solemnly crowned king,^a and assembled the parliament. The Peers were so much reduced by various causes, that they consisted only of one duke, four earls, one viscount, and about twenty-five barons.^b

F.—That assembly no longer hesitating or proposing any ambiguous decisions, as heretofore, when the fate of events was doubtful, boldly adhered to the wholesome principle of declaring for the strongest; and they annulled every grant which had passed during the reign of the princes of the house of Lancaster.^c Immense estates thus became vested in the crown, besides the forfeitures of the exiled or slaughtered nobles.

A.—Opposition was not yet entirely subdued; and the indefatigable Margaret acquiring some small assistance both from Scotland and France, on the promise of restoring Calais, ventured to reappear in Northumberland; but was attacked by the Marquis of Montague, brother of Warwick, in two engagements, one at Hedgley Moor, April 25, and the other at Hexham, May 8, 1464,^d in which she was again defeated. It is supposed that it was after this latter battle, the queen, retreating with the young prince into a forest, was assaulted by banditti, from whom, whilst quarrelling about the division of the spoil, she effected an escape. In the thickest part of the wood, she was discovered by a single robber, who approached her with his drawn sword; when finding evasion impossible, Margaret embraced the resolution of trusting to his generosity; and advancing towards him, she exclaimed, “My friend, I commit to your charge the son of your king.”^e The man, charmed by her confidence, concealed her for some time in the forest, and at length conducted her to Bamborough Castle, whence she passed into Flanders.

^a Fabian. ^b Parl. Hist. vol. 2. ^c Cotton, Abridgm. ^d Hall. ^e Monstrelet.

P.—And what became of the unfortunate Henry?

A.—He escaped into Lancashire, where he remained undiscovered for a twelvemonth; but he was at length betrayed, through the perfidy of a monk, as he one day sat at dinner at Waddington Hall, into the hands of John Talbot, the son of a knight, who despatched him to London.^a Another authority says, that Henry was taken by one John Cantlow.^b Being met at Islington by the Earl of Warwick, he was treated with great indignity, and his legs tied under the horse's belly.^c When he approached the Tower, he was compelled to ride three times round the pillory;^d his life was spared indeed, not from generosity, but contempt. The nobility of the Lancastrian party, who retired to Flanders, suffered the bitterest aggravations of poverty: Comines relates that he saw the Duke of Exeter, who bore the blood royal of England in his veins, following, without shoes, the Duke of Burgundy's carriage, absolutely begging for bread; when discovered, however, he received a small pension.

P.—This complete ascendancy of the York family ought to have insured peace, if not content, to England.

A.—For the space of five years it produced that effect, but the seeds were sown of future commotion. Edward, notwithstanding his unrelenting spirit, was remarkable for the affability of his manner, which procured him great popularity, and he resigned himself to the uncontrolled pursuit of pleasure. During this career, as he was on a hunting party, in Northamptonshire, he accidentally paid a visit to Jacqueline, the widow of the regent Duke of Bedford, who had married Sir Richard Wydevile, or Woodvile, a private gentle-

^a W. Wyrcester.

^c W. Wyrcester.

^b Fragment apud Hearne.

^d Monstrelet.

man of remarkably handsome person: amongst their numerous children was Elizabeth, of great beauty and accomplishments. This young lady had married Sir John Grey, of Groby, who fell in the second battle of St. Albans, fighting on the side of the Lancastrians, and his estate was for that reason forfeited. The king's visit to her parents seemed a favourable opportunity for obtaining compassion, and she threw herself at his feet, entreating him with many tears to take pity on her impoverished children.*

P.—What heart of adamant but must relent at the sight of so much beauty in distress!

A.—Edward raised the fair suppliant, with many assurances of favour, and becoming highly enamoured, proposed dishonourable conditions, which she refused, declaring that, though she did not account herself worthy to be his wife, she was yet too good to be his concubine. Opposition inflamed the passion of the king, and the parties, after some delay, were privately married at Grafton, May 1, 1463.^b

F.—Though this marriage was the source of many evils which incidentally afflicted the reign of Edward, and has been much blamed, I must own that I am disposed to view it with a more indulgent eye. Edward has been represented as the first English monarch who married a subject, which may be true of sovereigns actually in possession of the throne; but the queens of Stephen, John, and Henry the Fourth, were persons of private condition. The match was particularly obnoxious to the king's mother, who said, that the widowhood of Elizabeth might be sufficient to restrain him, for that it was a high disparagement in a king to be dishonoured with bigamy in his first marriage. Edward

* Hall.

^b Ibid.

merrily answered, " That inasmuch as she is a widow, and already has children, so, by God's blessing, I am a bachelor, and have some too; so there is proof that neither of us are likely to be barren; and as to the bigamy, let the bishop lay it in my way when I come to take orders, for I understand that it is forbidden to a priest, but I knew not that it was to a prince."^a

A.—The marriage has been a fruitful subject of fiction and romance. It has been stated that the Earl of Warwick had been despatched to Paris, to solicit the hand of Bona of Savoy, the French queen's sister, as a wife for Edward, and during his mission these nuptials took place;^b which were the cause of Warwick's subsequent revenge for the affront thus imposed. An absurd French drama has represented Warwick, without a shadow of probability, as himself enamoured with the fair Elizabeth: it is even doubtful whether Warwick ever undertook such an embassy, no mention being made of it in the records, or even by contemporary writers.

F.—In answer to those critics who consider no history as veracious, but what is bottomed on the gazette, it may be recollected that Warwick, having the government of Calais, might surely make a secret visit to Paris, even for such a purpose, without its being entered on the records; and as the circumstance is mentioned by Polydore Vergil, who lived within thirty years of the time, I should be inclined to credit the story.

A.—Yet when Edward declared his marriage in September, 1464, at Reading, the Earl of Warwick led the new queen to the Abbey church, in apparent friendship;^c a proof that he had not at that time formally broken with Edward, and could dissemble his resentment till a fit opportunity. The subsequent

^a Stow.

^b Hall.

^c W. Wyrcester.

favour shown to the Woodviles seems to have been the real foundation of Warwick's disgust: the queen's father was created Earl of Rivers, and all her brothers and sisters were married to persons possessing the greatest estates in the kingdom; with what little propriety, one instance suffices—the youngest brother, John Woodville, of the age of twenty, took to wife the old Duchess of Norfolk, of the age of fourscore.^a

F.—Yet the queen's relations were remarkable for their talents and accomplishments, and deserved elevation as much as other mere court favourites; Edward too thought that he was creating a powerful party, who might be safely opposed to the enormous power of some of the old nobility. But however the Earl of Warwick might envy, he could not complain of personal neglect, having received from Edward immense accessions to his former unbounded opulence.^b A contemporary writer^c asserts, that no person in England ever had half the possessions which Warwick enjoyed; and added to these was an annual revenue, derived from various official places, of twenty thousand marks.

A.—An additional cause of Warwick's displeasure has been attributed to an attempt of Edward to seduce either one of his daughters or his niece,^d which, from Edward's unbridled licentiousness, is not at all improbable. But Warwick's discontent did not break out into immediate action: an early step was to secure to his interest George duke of Clarence, next brother to the king, by the promise of giving him Isabel, the eldest daughter of Warwick, in marriage, the young duke being equally discontented by the preference shown to the Woodviles.^e No concerted plan of action seems to have been determined on, and the first decisive act

^a W. Wyrcester.
Hall.

^b Comines.

^c Fragment apud Hearne.

^d W. Wyrcester.

of hostility by Warwick was induced by an insurrection, which appears to have risen fortuitously.

F.—Many of the events of this reign are so obscure, so little authenticated, so perplexed, and perhaps so insignificant, that it is as difficult as it would be unprofitable to arrive at their origin.

A.—At York there was an hospital, which had received from an ancient grant of King Athelstan, a right to levy a *thrive* of wheat, probably twenty-four sheaves, from each plough land in the county. The country people complaining that the revenue was embezzled, refused payment, and resisting the processes at law to compel them, arrived in a body, fifteen thousand strong, at the gates of York, under their leader, Robert Huldborne, otherwise called Robin of Redesdale,^a who being soon after taken and executed, two persons of rank, Sir Henry Nevile, and Sir John Conyers, assumed their command, and proceeding southwards, defeated the king's troops at Banbury.^b A violent suspicion that the Earl of Warwick was covertly concerned in the mischief, is, that the northern insurgents sent a party to Grafton, the seat of the Earl of Rivers, whom they killed, together with his son, John Woodville,^c against which two persons Warwick had declared his particular animosity.

F.—Yet to counterbalance this presumption, both the earl and his son-in-law, Clarence, came from Calais, where they then resided, and were intrusted by Edward with a high command.^d

A.—The insurgents soon after dispersed, in consequence of a general pardon, by the advice of Warwick; a mode of proceeding so different to Edward's customary rigour, that it is not unfair to conclude that the earl's suggestion may have proceeded from some feeling

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Ibid.

^c Ibid.

^d Ibid.

of companionship. The next year another insurrection arose in Lincolnshire, led by Sir Robert Welles, whom the king took prisoner in a battle called Loose Coat Field,^a from the circumstance of the runaways disencumbering themselves of their garments. This obscure affair must have been secretly instigated by Warwick, as on its failure he fled with Clarence to France.^b Previous to this insurrection, it is said that Edward being invited to an entertainment at More Park, in Hertfordshire, by the Archbishop of York, brother to Warwick, as he was washing before supper, he was told by Sir John Ratcliff that one hundred armed men were ready to seize on his person. At this notice he suddenly quitted the house, mounted his horse, and rode off full speed to Windsor.^c This incident has given rise to another story, that Edward was about this time absolutely taken prisoner by Warwick, and committed to the custody of the archbishop at Middleham Castle, in Yorkshire; who allowing the king to hunt somewhat carelessly guarded, he made his escape,^d and chased his potent enemy out of the kingdom (May, 1470).

P.—You would not call even a clear explanation of these trivial, obscure, and uninteresting incidents, as divesting history of its *ennui*.

F.—They are adduced to preserve the chain of events entire, and are certainly a confirmation of the remark relative to the extreme uncertainty of the events in the reign of Edward the Fourth; which at first sight appears somewhat extraordinary, as happening on the eve of the revival of letters, and after the invention of printing had been discovered.

A.—It has been accounted for, from the neglect of authors to perpetuate their MSS. by various copies,

^a Fragment apud Hearne.

^c Fragment apud Hearne.

^b Kymer, vol. 11.

^d Hall. Comines.

foreseeing that the new invention would in time supply a sufficient number at a less price. The early printers too were more attentive to the works of antiquity, and less regarded recent transactions. And what author indeed, in this unhappy age, could trust historical truths to the press.

F.—Had Clarence and Warwick been more meritorious, their story would not be without interest.

A.—Warwick was refused entrance into Calais by his ungrateful deputy, Vauclere,^a though the Duchess of Clarence had been just delivered on board the vessel of a son, and was much distressed with sickness. At length the party arriving in France, were received by Louis the Eleventh with every demonstration of regard.^b

F.—Edward having lately given his sister Margaret in marriage to the Duke of Burgundy, a connexion that it is important to remember, France was exposed to the same combination which had been so fatal to its repose under Henry the Fifth. It is no wonder therefore that Louis embraced every expedient which he might think likely to disturb the government of England.

A.—A strange scene was about to follow. No animosity upon earth could ever exceed that which existed between Queen Margaret and Warwick: twice had the earl reduced Henry the Sixth to captivity, banished the queen, and put to death her most zealous partizans. In return, the queen had beheaded Warwick's father, and his friends out of number. Such inveterate rancour was founded on feelings so natural, that a cordial friendship could never be hoped; and Margaret indeed long withstood the solicitations of Louis to effect a reconciliation.^c Common interest, in

^a Comines.

^b Polydore Vergil.

^c Harleian MSS. from Stow, No. 543. Turner, *Hist. of Eng.* vol. 3.

the present extraordinary juncture, at length patched up an agreement, Margaret consenting that her son Prince Edward should marry the lady Anne, Warwick's youngest daughter, on condition that the earl should reseal Henry the Sixth on the throne.

P.—But what advantage could arise to the Duke of Clarence from this arrangement, which cut off every hope, if he ever entertained any, of succeeding to the English crown.

A.—Lest his own shallow understanding should not discover the folly of his conduct, Edward sent over a court lady, formerly in the train of the Duchess of Clarence, who might open his eyes.* This service the waiting gentlewoman so dexterously performed, that the duke secretly determined to desert Warwick at the first opportunity. The party having completed their preparations by the assistance of the King of France, were speedily landed in England, and Warwick soon gathered round him a considerable army.

F.—The popularity of this earl was at all times prodigious: by his exile the people seemed to think that the sun was taken from the firmament. One great cause of this was his excessive hospitality, or rather profusion of expense; no less than thirty thousand men, in his various castles and manors, are said to have daily lived at his board. Whenever he came to London, he kept such a house, that six oxen were eaten at a breakfast, and every tavern was full of his meat:† all persons who had the remotest acquaintance, might have as much boiled or roast as they could carry away on the point of a long dagger. But what a total insensibility to the happiness or interest of his country did he exhibit in this invasion, contradicting every

* Comines.

† Stow.

principle and profession of his former life, and replunging England into that abyss of calamity from which she had so recently escaped.

A.—A consideration for the happiness of the community seems rarely to have entered the brain of an old English baron, in pursuit of his own interest or ambition. Warwick, with his characteristic activity, hastened to the north, where Edward was endeavouring to suppress a commotion, got up for the occasion by the Marquis of Montague, the brother of Warwick. The king was surprised in the night time, near Nottingham, by the war cry of the Lancastrian party;^a and starting from his bed, had barely time to mount his horse, and escape from his many concealed enemies. He hurried to Lynn, in Norfolk, and embarked with about seven or eight hundred companions, in one ship and two hulks, which he found lying in the harbour (Oct. 1470): "He departed," says an old writer,^b "without bag or baggage, without cloth, sack, or mail, perchance with a great purse and little treasure." After many difficulties, being chased by the ships of the Hanse Towns, then at war with England, the party reached Alcmaer in safety. The king had nothing with which he could reward the captain, but a cloak lined with valuable furs.^c

P.—A strange change of fortune, which converted a mighty prince and a brave warrior, without a battle or a blow, into a wandering exile.

A.—Edward had received intelligence of his danger, but lulled into false security, he paid it no attention. Warwick now acted as master: he first brought King Henry from the Tower, and led him to St. Paul's, to offer his thanksgivings.^d His friends attributed his restoration to the undoubted interposition of Providence;

^a Comines.

^b Hall.

^c Comines.

^d Hall.

by his enemies it was treated with wonder or with ridicule; to himself, it is doubtful whether it were a source of joy or regret. To the credit of Warwick, only one person of distinction was sacrificed to his vengeance, John Tibetot, or Tiptoft, earl of Worcester, an accomplished nobleman, and the great patron of letters in that barbarous age; yet it is said that the love of science had not produced its usual effect, in softening the temper, as he was distinguished by the appellation of "the butcher,"^a for his various cruelties exercised upon the Lancastrians, from which party he was a deserter.

P.—But Warwick surely could not pretend to punish any one merely for the offence of changing sides.

F.—This earl translated some trivial works from the Latin, and grievously has Caxton^b the printer lamented his death: "O good blessed Lord God," says he, "what great loss was it of that noble, vertuous, and well-disposed lord." Fuller adds, "The axe did at one blow cut off more learning than was left in the heads of all the surviving nobility!"^c

A.—Warwick summoning a parliament, that equitable assembly immediately reversed every statute made during the reign of Edward, whom it voted an usurper,^d and attainted all his adherents. But its decrees were destined not to be of very long duration, for Warwick's popularity declining with the possession of power, Edward, assisted by a small force from his brother-in-law the Duke of Burgundy, in six months ventured to return to England. He landed at Ravenspur,^e the precise spot which received Henry the Fourth, when Duke of Lancaster, in similar pursuit of a crown. The people were not pleased at his reappearance, and

^a Fabian.

^c Worthies, Camb.

^b The Boke of Tulle on Old Age, &c.

^d Hall.

^e Comines.

his discouragement was such that, like Henry the Fourth, he protested that he merely came to claim his private inheritance, and in York Cathedral he took a solemn oath to that purpose. His partizans now flocked to his standard. For some mysterious reasons, the Marquis of Montague neglected to crush this attempt in the bud, as he easily might have done; and Edward, with a daily augmenting force, passed the Earl of Warwick at Leicester, by taking a different road, and presented himself before the gates of the metropolis: indeed during these civil wars the general cry of the armies was, "For London! for London!"^a Had he here been rejected, he was undone; but in that city, always favourable to the house of York, he had many friends: the young, the gay, and the fair, were attached to his person and his cause;^b many wealthy citizens too, to whom he was deeply indebted, had a substantial motive for showing favour, in recollecting that Edward's success was the only chance of repayment. He was received with acclamations; and his rival Henry, if rival he might be called, ever the sport of fortune, was again replaced, dressed in a long gown of blue velvet,^c in his former lodging in the Tower.

P.—But did Edward recover his crown in the same bloodless way in which it had been lost?

A.—The readiness with which Edward entered the field is the most shining part of his character: he immediately collected forces, and found himself sufficiently strong to give battle to Warwick at Barnet, April 14, 1471. The fickle Clarence here deserted his father-in-law. This contest was furious and long uncertain; but Warwick's soldiers mistaking, in a mist said to be raised by Friar Bungay,^d the Earl of Oxford's

^a Fuller, Church Hist.

^b Comines.

^c Fabian.

^d Ibid.

cognizance, a star, for that of Edward, a sun,^a fell upon their friends, which caused an irretrievable confusion, in which Warwick and his brother Montague were both slain, and victory declared for Edward.^b

F.—The last moments of the earl have been ennobled beyond their desert by Shakspeare, who makes him utter the sublime exclamation whilst bleeding to death, in reply to his friends assuring him

The queen from France hath brought a puissant power,
Even now we heard the news. Ah, could'st thou fly!

Warw.—Why then I would not fly.

Hen. VI. part 3.

A.—Thus perished the most powerful nobleman that England has seen since the Conquest, remembered by his sobriquet, “the King-maker;” than which nothing more glorious could be said of any subject, did true glory consist in the possession, and not in the just use, of excessive power. The victory at Barnet, however decisive, did not secure the crown: Queen Margaret, who seems to have lingered unaccountably in France, landed at Weymouth with her son, now of the age of eighteen, on the very day of the battle. When the dreadful result was communicated, all her courage forsook her, and she fainted. Margaret would have returned to France, but being encouraged by the arrival of several Lancastrian noblemen, she resumed her spirit, and put herself once more at the head of an army, determining to assert her husband’s claim to the last. The expeditious Edward, by a rapid march, soon reached her at Tewkesbury,^c on the Severn, and totally routed this devoted remnant of the Lancastrian party: the queen and her son were taken prisoners. An afflicting scene followed: the young prince, brought before Edward, was asked how he had dared to disturb the peace of the kingdom, he

^a Leland, Collect. vol. 2.

^b Hist. Croy. Cont.

^c Ibid.

replied, more mindful of his high birth than his dejected fortune, that he came to recover his just inheritance. Edward, provoked at this intrepidity, had the baseness to strike the youth on the face with his gauntlet,* which the attendants taking for a signal, instantly despatched the victim with their daggers. Clarence and Gloucester were present at this assassination, but whether they imbrued their hands in the blood of this unfortunate prince is uncertain. This is the story related by Hall; Comines says that young Edward perished in the field of battle.

F.—This youth was evidently a prince of so much spirit, that his removal from the scene of contention, though most barbarously brought about, provided the story be true, was, I fear, a necessary though cruel policy.

A.—The death of his father soon followed, and as it is thought from the same consideration. After the forcible scene in Shakspeare, it would be a vain endeavour to create a belief, that the deed was performed by another hand than the Duke of Gloucester's, even though the arguments were stronger in his favour. "I think it prudent," says a contemporary historian,^b "to say nothing of the death of Henry the Sixth; may God grant time for repentance to the person, whoever he was, who laid his sacrilegious hands upon the Lord's anointed." All the chroniclers of the next age, as well as Comines, make no scruple in attributing it to the violence of Richard, but without King Edward's knowledge; yet it was asserted, that when Henry heard what losses had happened to his friends, the death of his son and the captivity of his wife, he took the circumstances so much to heart, that out of pure displea-

* Fabian.

^b Hist. Croy. Cont.

sure, indignation, and melancholy, he died.^a A more harmless being than this unfortunate monarch it is impossible to picture: his frame was slender; his countenance melancholy and unmeaning, not at all resembling his handsome, strong, and active father, or the beautiful Katharine, his mother; weak in understanding, facile in disposition, devout, chaste, temperate, forgiving, humble in prosperity, patient in adversity,^b he wanted no quality to form a perfect saint; and indeed he would have been canonized, had not Henry the Seventh thought that the court of Rome asked too high a price.^c

F.—There was another reason for the refusal: the Pope alleging, “that as Henry was reputed in the world but a simple man, the estimation of that kind of honour might be diminished, if there was not a proper line of distinction drawn between saints and innocents.”^d However, as it was, miracles in abundance were wrought at his tomb.^e

A.—Henry the Sixth was undoubtedly a well-meaning man, and can be reproached with nothing but his extreme incapacity. Such was the innocence of his life, that his subjects could never bear the idea of having any personal injury offered him. Of his pure and saintly qualities there are many instances: once, seeing at a pageant some young females too loosely apparelled, he put his hands before his eyes, turned his back, and left the apartment, saying, “Fie, fie, for shame; forsooth you be to blame.”^f He never swore, as was too much the custom of that age, but contented himself with “Yea, forsooth, and no, forsooth.”^g At

^a Harleian MSS. from Stow.

^b Hall.

^c Ibid.

^d Bacon, Hist. of Hen. VII.

^e Hist. Croy. Cont.

^f Ex Collec. Joannis Blakman apud Hearne in Otterbourne. ^g Ibid.

one time, beholding the quarter of a person, who had been executed, fixed on the Tower, he humanely exclaimed, "Take it away, it is a shame to use any Christian so cruelly on my account."^a At another time, receiving a blow which put him in great danger, he only said, "Forsooth, ye do foully to smite the Lord's anointed."^b There is one instance of the royal facetiousness: he sent to Archbishop Chichele, whose father was a tailor, a *shred pie*, containing pieces of cloth and stuff of several colours. The prelate courteously entertained the messenger, and said, "That if the king should so far exceed his royal sire, Henry the Fifth, as I have gone beyond the meanness of my poor father, he will make the most accomplished monarch in Christendom."^c

F.—Henry too was said to be a poet. The following verses have been attributed to his pen; they are at least as good as any of his contemporaries:

Kingdoms are but cares;
State is devoid of stay;
Riches are ready snares,
And hasten to decay.

Who meaneth to remove the rock
Out of the slimy flood,
Shall mire himself, and hardly 'scape
The swelling of the flood.^d

The two noble endowments of Eton, and King's College, Cambridge, have obtained from posterity a greater regard for Henry's memory than his own merits could otherwise claim; these classical structures exciting every spectator

To spare the meek usurper's holy head.

A.—It is pity that the amiable qualities of Henry should have been as detrimental as the tyranny of other

^a Ex Collec. Joannis Blakman apud Hearne in Otterbourne.

^b Ibid. ^c Fuller, Church Hist. ^d Nugæ Antiq. vol. 1, p. 386.

monarchs; for of whatever encroachment on the rights of the subject either Queen Margaret or her ministers had been guilty, there is no doubt but an able and efficient sovereign would have repressed the claims of the house of York, however well-founded, and prevented the cruel devastation of the civil wars, according to the speech of the dying Clifford, who was slain in the action of Ferrybridge:

Ah, Henry! hadst thou swayed as kings should do,
Or as thy father and his father did,
I and ten thousand in this luckless realm
Had left no mourning widows for our death,
And thou this day hadst kept thy chair in peace.^a

P.—What was the fate of the heroic Margaret, after thus witnessing the ruin of all her hopes, in the death of her son and husband.

A.—She endured a captivity of five years in the Tower, when Louis the Eleventh,^b at the treaty of Pecquigni, paid fifty thousand crowns for her ransom: retiring to France, she died there in her fifty-ninth year (1482);^c a woman of extraordinary energy of mind, whose unshaken perseverance, during a series of unparalleled reverses, has never been surpassed.

F.—But as Margaret was exempt from the weakness, she was equally destitute of the softer graces of her sex: her ferocity equalling her courage, she formed the most striking contrast to her compassionate but pusillanimous husband that can well be imagined.

A.—Edward being now safely resealed on his throne, a calm of some years continuance succeeded, and the king resumed his habits of luxury and indulgence. His mistresses were many: of three of them he used to say, one was the merriest (Jane Shore), one the wittiest, and one the holiest, that ever man boasted

^a Hen. VI. part 3.

^b Rymer, vol. 11.

^c Pere Daniel.

of, the last being always at church when he sent for her.^a These excesses it seems did not violently displease the nation,^b and Edward cultivated popularity with great success: he more than once sent for the Lord Mayor and aldermen to come and hunt with him, treating them with the utmost familiarity, and sending them home loaded with venison.^c

F.—This contrast to the perplexity felt during the late contests must have been sensibly felt. Holinshed relates a story, which shows what anxiety attended persons of condition at that unhappy period. Sir William Hawkeford, who lived in Devonshire, suddenly called to him the keeper of his park, with whom he quarrelled, asserting that the man did not walk in the night about the park, but suffered the game to be spoiled and the deer to be stolen; wherefore he desired him to be more vigilant, and commanded that if he met any man in his circuit in the night time, who would not speak or stand, to kill him, whosoever he might be. The knight purposing to end his doleful days, did one dark night walk alone in his park. The keeper hearing some one stir, asked who was there? but no answer being made, he desired the party to stand, which not being complied with, he drew his arrow, and killed his master, whom recognising too late, he called to remembrance his commandment: and so, adds the relater, this knight, otherwise learned and wise, being afraid to displease man, displeased God.

A.—The tranquillity of Edward was somewhat disturbed by the quarrels of his brothers, Clarence and Gloucester;^d the latter becoming desirous of espousing Anne, the affianced wife (their marriage never having been consummated) of the late young Prince Edward,

^a Sir T. More.

^b Ibid.

^c Fabian.

^d Hist. Croy. Cont.

and coheirress of the great estates of the Earl of Warwick. Clarence was unwilling to "divide the livelihood" with his brother, and secreted the lady so carefully, that for several months she could not be found: at length Gloucester discovered her in London, in the dress of a cookmaid,^a and the nuptials were completed.

P.—Whatever blame there might be attached to this transaction, it rested with Clarence, and not with Gloucester.

A.—The king took an effectual method to please his people, by declaring war against France; not that he had received any recent injury from Louis, but the old claim to the French crown he considered as furnishing a sufficient pretence.^b

P.—Really one would have thought that such a plea was by this time pretty well worn out.

F.—The pleasure of his subjects was somewhat damped by the mode, facetiously termed a benevolence, by which Edward endeavoured to raise the supplies,^c and which had rarely before been put in practice: by this arrangement every one was to give what he pleased, or rather what he did not please;^d and thus immense sums were drawn together. One writer^e says, the amount was greater than ever had been seen before, or would be seen hereafter: this author however was not a prophet. Edward's person and address were now very useful to him: he had called before him a widow, much abounding in wealth and well stricken in years, of whom he asked what she would give him towards defraying this great charge. "By my troth," says she, "for thy lovely countenance thou shalt have even twenty pounds." The king looking scarcely

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Rymer, vol. 11.

^c Hist. Croy. Cont.

^d Ibid.

^e Ibid.

for half that sum, thanked her, and gave her a kiss. "Whether the flavour of his breath," says the old chronicler,^a "did so comfort her stomach, or she esteemed the kiss of a king so precious a jewel, she swore that he should have twenty pounds more."

P.—Was Edward afraid of applying to parliament, by resorting to this new mode of acquiring a revenue?

A.—That assembly, though ever averse to open their purses, had voted a tenth, and one and three-fourths of a fifteenth;^b but the amount of which, though considerable, was found quite inadequate to the undertaking.

P.—Did these proportions produce a certain sum, or did they vary as the property of individuals fluctuated?

A.—As their names imply; a tenth or fifteenth was that portion of the moveables or personal property of the subject, formerly of infinitely less importance than at present. A tenth was first imposed by Henry the Second, under the pretext of a crusade against the Sultan Saladin; hence it was called Saladin's tenth.^c The original amount of these taxes is uncertain; but in the eighth year of Edward the Third, a fifteenth was ascertained to be of the value of twenty-nine thousand pounds, and that sum was afterwards unalterably adhered to, and each parish knew what portion it must contribute. A subsidy was a modification of the ancient scutage upon each knight's fee, but was not imposed, like that demand, directly upon the land, but upon persons, in respect of their reputed estates, and seems to have been introduced about the reign of Richard the Second: the amount was after the nominal rate of four shillings in the pound for lands, and two shillings and eightpence for goods; and it seems to have produced

^a Hall.

^b Cotton, Abridg.

^c Hoveden.

about seventy thousand pounds.^a The parliament that voted these grants to Edward was dissolved in 1474, the House of Commons having sitten two years and a half, the longest period hitherto known.

F.—It is remarkable that, as parliaments increased in length they diminished in independence.

A.—Edward now passed over to Calais with an army of fifteen thousand archers, attended by the chief nobility, all on fire to reconquer France. Louis, dreadfully alarmed at the prospect of renewed hostilities with England, wisely abandoned every punctilio, and considered by what means he might best elude the fury of the attack. When the herald came to announce the defiance of Edward, the French king presented him with a gift of three hundred crowns and thirty yards of crimson velvet;^b and by this generosity he had an opportunity of discovering which of Edward's ministers might probably be accessible to the same sort of arguments: but indeed there was no danger of mistake, for not one was found of sufficient virtue to reject his offers, and he bribed judiciously, with a most unsparing hand.^c So surrounded, the English king himself was soon persuaded by the same irresistible reasoning to conclude a truce, in which it was agreed that Edward, for the sum of seventy-five thousand crowns in ready money, and an annuity of fifty thousand crowns a year, should withdraw his army.^d

F.—Such a treaty reflects little credit on either party; but somewhat to exonerate Edward from blame, he found on his arrival that his ally, the Duke of Burgundy, had not brought him the smallest assistance. The attempt to conquer France, alone and unaided, might well appear impracticable, especially as its

^a Blackstone, Com. vol. 1, c. 8.

^b Comines.

^c Ibid.

^d Ibid.

hitherto discordant factions were united under the government of a most politic, if not popular, monarch.

A.—As Louis made interest the sole test of honour, all ideas of the meanness or pusillanimity of purchasing a retreat by paying tribute were lost, in the view of the advantages which it procured; and he plumed himself in the notion of overreaching Edward, whom he professed to treat with the greatest deference, but took every opportunity with his own courtiers of turning into ridicule.^a The English camp was abundantly supplied, and the soldiers indulged themselves in every excess of riot and drunkenness; which is not much to be wondered at, as Louis sent them three hundred cart-loads of wine;^b and to rivet the friendship of the two monarchs, an interview was appointed to take place on the bridge of the town of Pecquigni.

P.—But is it not surprising that so suspicious a mortal as Louis should forget the fatal interview on the bridge of Montrean, between the Dukes of Burgundy and Orleans, some fifty years before?^c

A.—Louis was far from forgetting it; he mentioned his apprehensions to Comines, and a different plan was consequently arranged. In the former instance, the parties met on the bridge, between two barriers a few yards apart; but at this interview the monarchs saw each other through a sort of lattice, such as secures a lion in his cage (I use the historian's own phrase), erected on the centre of the bridge: they shook hands and entered into familiar conversation. Louis incautiously invited Edward to Paris, saying, "We have many fine women there; and should you fall into any error by their means, my cousin of Bourbon" (a priest celebrated for his gallantries), "shall give you absolution."^d

^a Comines.

^b *Ibid.*

^c See page 261.

^d Comines.

Edward, eager in the pursuit of pleasure, did not refuse the invitation, and it required some address in Louis to evade the acceptance of his own offer. Lord Howard being permitted to sup with him, said that if it pleased Louis he would persuade his master to pay a visit to Paris. The French king pretended not to hear, and calling for water, rose without answering.^a He said afterwards to Comines, his confidant, "Edward is a very handsome and amorous king; if he come to Paris, he may find some affected dame, who may make him so many fine speeches, that he may be desirous of returning. His predecessors have been too much in Paris and in Normandy: I like not his company on this side the sea; on the other, I will esteem him as my brother and my very good friend."^b

P.—Such was the curious termination of this French expedition.

F.—That Edward was egregiously duped, is sufficiently evident. Comines represents the English as not so subtle in treaty as the French, as being rash and choleric, and going very bluntly to work; he declares that they did not understand the dissimulations practised by the French, and that what they had gained by their acknowledged superiority in arms, they often lost by their little skill in negotiation.^c

A.—The only memorable circumstance during the remainder of Edward's reign, was the most reprehensible transaction of his life, the trial and execution of the Duke of Clarence. This prince, of a haughty and ambitious spirit, of mean genius, ungovernable passion, and of fickle and inconstant temper, being never heartily forgiven by Edward for his former adherence to Warwick, became discontented and unquiet, and giving way

^a Comines.

^b Ibid.

^c Liv. 3, c. 8; liv. 4, c. 6 and 9.

to a querulous disposition, complained of the king's government, and even dropped hints, it is said, of the illegitimacy of Edward's birth.^a

F.—If such were the conduct of Clarence, which is doubtful, it was as reprehensible as absurd; but if it were falsely charged upon him, it was bitterly retaliated on the children of Edward in the next reign.

A.—To provoke Clarence into measures which might furnish ground for impeachment, two of his friends, John Stacy, an ecclesiastic, and Thomas Burdett, of Arrow, in Warwickshire, were brought to trial, and executed, upon the frivolous charge of necromancy.^b The latter gentleman, it is said, had given offence by an intemperate speech: the king one day hunting in his park at Arrow, killed a white buck, which was a great favourite with the owner, who, vexed at its loss, broke into a passion, and wished the horns of the stag in the belly of the person who had advised the king to commit that insult upon him.^c The Duke of Clarence, enraged at these prosecutions, maintained the innocence of his friends, and inveighed against the iniquity of their prosecution in such terms, that the king committed him to the Tower, and summoned him to be tried for his life before the House of Peers.^d

F.—In this age accusation and condemnation being the same thing, we must not expect to hear of the duke's acquittal.

A.—The king had the indecency, not to say the injustice, of appearing personally as his brother's accuser,^e and pleading the cause against him. Clarence's conduct had been doubtless blameable, but no overt

^a Act of Attainder, Rot. Parl. vol. 6.

^c Stow.

^d Hist. Croy. Co'

Hist. Croy. Cont.

id.

act of treason was alleged, yet the duke was found guilty by the Peers; and the House of Commons, not to be behind hand in servility, petitioned for his execution.* The manner of his death is differently reported. "He was drowned," says Fabian, "in a barell of malmsey;" yet this does not appear to have been of his own choosing: all that we know with certainty is, that his death was secret (1478).

F.—The scene of the murder, as given by Shakspeare, is sufficiently probable: one of the villains stabbing him, says,

Take that, and that; if all this will not do,
I'll drown you in the malmsey butt within:†

which was probably done to make the matter sure. This inhuman proceeding is represented by the poet, according to the current tale of his own time, as performed at the instigation of the Duke of Gloucester, on very insufficient grounds, the circumstance not being at all asserted by contemporary authorities, or even glanced at by the gossiping chroniclers, Hall, Holinshed, and Stow. Sir Thomas More accuses him only of being not displeased with the event of Clarence's death. The brothers had quarrelled, it is true, about the division of the estate of the Earl of Warwick, their late father-in-law; but it is hardly feasible that Gloucester had thus early cherished his aspiring views upon the crown, Edward being in the enjoyment of robust health, and only in his thirty-sixth year. There prevails a report, that the chief cause of this violent prosecution by Edward, was a current prophecy that the king should be murdered by one, the initial letter of whose name was G.‡ Such folly might have influence, as it is said by Comines that the English were never without some silly prognostication.

* Hist. Croy. Cont.

† Rich. III. act I.

‡ Hall.

P.—It was in his confinement in the Tower, previous to his execution, that Shakspeare has put into the mouth of Clarence the striking description of his alarming dream :

O then began the tempest to my soul :
 I pass'd, methought, the melancholy flood,
 With that grim ferryman which poets write of,
 Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.
 The first that there did greet my stranger soul,
 Was my great father-in-law, renowned Warwick,
 Who cry'd aloud, *What scourge for perjury*
Can this dark monarchy afford for Clarence ?
 And so he vanish'd. Then came wandering by
 A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
 Dabbled in blood, and he shriek'd out aloud,
Clarence is come, false, flouting, perjured Clarence,
That stabb'd me in the field by Tewkesbury ;
Seize on him, furies, take him to your torments !
 O Brakenbury ! I have done these things,
 That now give evidence against my soul,
 For Edward's sake, and see how he requites me !^a

A.—Edward however bitterly repented of this murder. Once a nobleman requesting a pardon for one of his vassals, he deeply sighed, “ Ah, poor brother ! no one would speak for you.”^b

F.—As in the early part of Henry the Sixth's reign, the murder of Humfrey duke of Gloucester was one great cause of all the subsequent misfortunes which befel the house of Lancaster, so this prosecution and murder of Clarence prepared the way for the similar ruin of the house of York.

A.—Edward, at ease in his government, abandoned himself to the two contrary passions of avarice and luxury : he extorted various sums from his subjects, and rioted in every excess of pleasure.^c During his negotiation with Louis, he had stipulated a marriage

^a Rich. III. act 1.

^b Hall.

^c Hist. Croy. Cont.

for his eldest daughter with the dauphin, which he had now the mortification of finding would not be carried into execution; and feeling himself outwitted in his transactions with the French king, who withdrew his pension, he prepared to avenge the indignity by taking arms;^a but was prevented from the enterprise by death, which occurred somewhat suddenly, from surfeit, occasioned by general intemperance both in eating and drinking (9th April, 1483), in the forty-first year of his age, and the twenty-third of his reign.^b

F.—From the repeated mention of Edward's personal beauty, strength, and vigour, by all the old writers, we must conclude that he was one of the handsomest men of the age. In his latter years he grew bloated and corpulent, the effect of excessive indulgence; but Comines says that, when he first saw the English monarch, he never beheld a finer person. That Edward had no objection to hear such commendation, we may judge from parliament expressing its admiration of the "beauté of person that it hath pleased almighty God to bless you."^c

P.—Yet the engraving by Vertue, from an original picture in Kensington Palace, does not lead us to expect such excessive encomiums.

A.—The qualities of Edward's mind did not entirely correspond with the perfections of his body; yet he possessed considerable talent, and well understood his own interest. In adversity he was nothing abashed; in prosperity, rather joyful than proud:^d his good fortune was miraculous. That his valour and military skill were eminent, we may conclude from his having gained nine pitched battles in person; in which, he told Comines, that he always fought on foot until he found

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Ibid.

^c Rot. Parl. vol. 5.

^d Sir T. More.

that the foe gave way, and that he then mounted his horse, and joined in the pursuit, crying to his soldiers to spare the common men, but to slay the leaders. His cruelty was unrelenting; the axe intimated his displeasure; and his obdurate heart spared a brother no more than a Lancastrian: he put no restraint upon his licentious passions, which involved him in much inconvenience and distress. His love of money was excessive, which he gratified by becoming a very great and successful merchant;* and by other means far less exceptionable, he so well filled his coffers, that he was one of our very few ancient kings who did not live in straits and die in debt.

F.—Yet with all these palpable vices, the historian of Croyland celebrates Edward the Fourth for his devout attachment to the Catholic faith.

A.—Which we may the more wonder at, as Edward does not appear to have been a great benefactor to the church; nor did he indulge the clergy in their persecution of Lollardism, one victim only, John Goose,^b suffering during his whole reign, upon whose unfortunate name the Papists have been rather witty.

F.—During the wars of the Roses, religious controversy was little regarded; the clergy adhered to their old opinions and practices, and the laity were both ignorant and indifferent.

A.—Though cruelty, extortion, and wantonness, discolour every page of Edward's history, his manners were so easy and engaging,^c as to acquire him a prodigious popularity. Like most men of fine person, he was more vain than proud, as we may infer from his love of magnificent dress. That he entered readily into

* Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Fuller Church Hist.

^c Sir T. More.

conversation with all classes of his subjects, the old ballad of "King Edward and the Tanner of Tamworth" is a familiar illustration.* This person mistaking the king, and using much discourteous language, at length perceived his error, by the approach of the royal train: when having become much frightened and confused, he said, with a certain blundering repentance, "*I hope,*" instead of "*I fear,* that I shall be hanged to-morrow;" which mistake, as well as the tanner's apprehensions, so well diverted the king, that he gave the offender, in recompence for the good sport that he had afforded, the inheritance of Plumpton Park.

F.—The story reminds us of the adventure in the ballad of "King Henry the Second and the Miller of Mansfield," so pleasingly dramatised by Dodsley; and also of another ballad, in which Charles the Second acts nearly a similar part. Indeed the leading features in the character of this latter monarch bear a strong resemblance to those of Edward the Fourth: the same unbounded licentiousness; the same hardness of heart, with the same gaiety of disposition, arising from abundance of animal spirits; the same inclination to relax into sloth and indulgence, but capable of exertion on a great emergency; and what is a little singular, both of them suffering exile, and both condescending to accept of bribes from the kings of France.

* Percy Reliques, vol. 2.

DISSERTATION XL

SECTION II.

EDWARD V. - - - - A.D. 1483.

P.—[In the ancient history of England, nothing is more ill defined than the limits of the power of a regent or protector; nor was it better ascertained at what age a minor prince became entitled to assume the reins of government: two uncertainties which, at the death of Edward the Fourth, exposed his defenceless children to that tragical catastrophe, which is unparalleled in European annals.

A.—During the latter years of the late monarch, the nation generally acquiescing in his title, submitted with great quietness to his sway; but the court was agitated by two parties, which much disturbed the repose of the sovereign: his marriage had given great offence to the ancient nobility; and the sudden elevation of the queen's relations, the Earl of Rivers, her brother, and the Marquis of Dorset and Lord Grey, her sons, though persons of merit, excited much jealousy and discontent.

P.—Who were the persons that conceived their own desert overshadowed by the pre-eminence of the Woodvilles?

A.—Next to Richard, duke of Gloucester, who appears to have been very wary in the expression of his dissatisfaction, stood Henry Stafford, duke of Buckingham, a prince of the blood, being descended by a female from Thomas of Woodstock, youngest son of Edward the Third, a noble possession and

considerable talents, who, though he had married the queen's sister, was far too haughty to act in subserviency to her inclinations. The lords Stanley and Howard were men of influence and reputation, as was also the chamberlain, Lord Hastings: this last nobleman was particularly obnoxious to the queen, as it was supposed that he was the confidant of the king in all his dissolute pleasures. Edward, in his last illness, aware of these bitter enmities, assembled the leaders of the different parties in his sick chamber, and engaged them to promise a suspension of their animosities.*

F.—A vain expedient to subdue the rivalry of these courtiers, all alike indifferent to the public good, and intent alone on their own advancement.

A.—Edward the Fifth, now of the age of thirteen, was, on the day of his father's death, April 9th, 1483, proclaimed king in London. The Duke of Gloucester was absent at York;† and it is scarcely to be doubted, that the moment he heard that the breath had left his brother's body, he formed the dangerous design of mounting his throne.

P.—But did his conduct during the life of Edward afford just cause for such a suspicion? or can the design be supposed to have been excited by the progress of events?

A.—So profound a dissembler, we may naturally conclude, well concealed his intentions; for it appears from every record during the late reign, that the whole tenor of his conduct never gave offence to Edward, and that, with singular moderation and prudence, he continued his attachment to the throne, through every change of his brother's varying fortune.

F.—But the queen seems to have been instinctively

* Sir T. More.

† Hist. Croy. Cont.

aware of the danger; and as she had borne an uncontrolled sway over her husband, she became anxious to maintain the same influence over her son, perhaps justly apprehensive that the safety of herself and her family depended on that ascendancy.

A.—The young king resided at the castle of Ludlow, under the tutelage of his maternal uncle, the Earl of Rivers, an accomplished nobleman, of talents equally adapted to civil and military affairs, and whose memory is endeared as the early patron of literature, and the encourager of Caxton and his new art of printing; he was also a poet, but I compassionately refrain from quoting any of his verses. To this nobleman the queen wrote, desiring him to levy a body of forces,^a as he was captain-general of the kingdom, in order to escort the king to London, and protect him during his approaching coronation.

F.—But the nobility might justly be jealous that the queen and her kindred were usurping more power than the law allowed them, as the practice of the constitution clearly pointed out the Duke of Gloucester as regent.

A.—So the latter maintained, and insisted that such a proceeding must be considered as tantamount to a declaration of civil war; and under pretence of pacifying the quarrel, artfully protested against the appearance of an armed force, as equally dangerous as unnecessary. The queen, in a fatal moment, overawed by the violence of the duke's opposition, countermanded her orders, and the young king, accompanied by Rivers, proceeded on his journey, attended only by his usual retinue.^b

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Sir T. More.

P.—But in this alarming crisis, why did not parliament interfere?

A.—That assembly had so much declined in spirit during the rule of the house of York, that had it been sitting, which was not the case, it would probably have made no remonstrance against the wishes of Gloucester, who appeared likely to become the stronger party.

F.—Yet it might at least have been recollected, that in the last two examples of minorities, those of Richard the Second and Henry the Sixth, the old practice of guardianship by the common law, in separating the custody of the minor's person from the heir of his crown, was strictly adhered to: parliament, in the reign of Richard the Second, appointing a council of nine persons for that purpose, whilst the administration of the government rested in the hands of the Duke of Lancaster. The case of the infant Henry the Sixth was still more in point, as the same authority intrusted him to the care of Cardinal Beaufort, who was not in the order of succession, his uncles, the dukes of Bedford and Gloucester, acquiescing in the arrangement.

A.—Such examples did not suit the ambition of Richard: he set off from York, for the purpose of obtaining possession of the person of the young king: at Northampton he was joined by the Duke of Buckingham, with a vast retinue; at this town also the Earl of Rivers came to pay his respects, having sent forward his royal pupil to Stoney Stratford, a stage nearer to London, and was received by Gloucester with dissimulated welcome. The next morning the apprehensions of Lord Rivers were awakened by some suspicious circumstances, but it was too late to retreat. As the party entered Stoney Stratford together, the earl was arrested; Gloucester proceeding to visit the young king, in his

very presence seized Lord Richard Grey, his uterine brother, and his friend Sir Thomas Vaughan,^a an officer of the household, under the pretence that they had estranged the duke from the affections of his royal nephew. Edward in vain protested their innocence, and entreated, even with tears, their liberation.^b They were despatched with Rivers to the north of England; and after being removed to various places, were at length confined in Pomfret Castle.

P.—A dismal beginning of an equitable protectorate.

A.—Hearing these calamitous tidings, the queen, with her youngest son the Duke of York, a boy nine years of age, and her five daughters, with the Marquis of Dorset, took refuge in the sanctuary of Westminster, justly apprehensive of her own and her children's safety. Meanwhile Gloucester proceeded to London, in which city he was received with acclamations, riding bare-headed before the young monarch, to whom he showed so much apparent respect, as greatly to delight the people.^c King Edward was attended by a train of five hundred followers in deep mourning, himself wearing a mantle of blue velvet.^d The Duke of Gloucester was deeply offended at the queen's evident mistrust of his designs; and his first step was to withdraw from her custody into his own hands the young Duke of York: for this purpose he sent to the sanctuary, Rotherham, archbishop of York, a man none of the shrewdest, "who found the queen," says Sir Thomas More, "sitting alone, low on the rushes, all desolate and dismayed." The prelate endeavouring to comfort her with a friendly message from Lord Hastings, she exclaimed, "A woe with him, it is he that goeth about to destroy me and my blood." The archbishop had the weakness to use

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Sir T. More.

^c Ibid.

^d Fabian.

so poor an argument as to say, "Madam, be of good cheer; if they crown any other king than your son, we shall on the morrow crown his brother;" as if he had the power of protecting one of these hapless youths more than the other. As a proof of his sincerity, he left the great seal in her possession; but speedily bethinking him of this imprudence, he sent for it before the night was passed.^a

P.—By what authority did Gloucester assume the power of regent, or protector?

A.—A great council had been assembled, though the precise time of its meeting does not appear, which conferred the office of protector on Richard: this was clearly the business of parliament, not of a council; but it is acknowledged that it was received by the people with satisfaction. Gloucester finding that the **persuasions** of Rotherham were not sufficiently powerful, despatched Bouchier, archbishop of Canterbury, with some other lords, to withdraw the young duke from the sanctuary. That prelate, totally unconscious of the protector's views, represented to the queen in forcible terms the unreasonableness of her thus detaining the boy. The queen expressed her apprehensions very explicitly; but overcome by entreaty, rather than convinced by argument, she called for the young duke, and said, "Fare you well, mine own sweet son; let me kiss you yet once before you go, for God knoweth when we shall kiss together again." "And therewith," says Sir Thomas More, "she kissed him and blessed him, turned her back and wept, and went her way."

F.—The diabolical plan of the protector, no honourable person could rationally penetrate. It is generally supposed that the Duke of Buckingham himself was

^a Sir T. More.

^b Ibid.

unapprised of Richard's views upon the crown till he had got possession of the two princes; and then the necessity of securing Richard's elevation was pointed out, since, if Edward were permitted to reign, he would most assuredly revenge upon Buckingham the arrest and subsequent murder of Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, who were endeared by so many tender ties to his affections.

A.—Those illegal murders were now determined on by the protector, with the consent both of Buckingham and Hastings: without even pretending to any formality of accusation or process of trial, he sent an order to Sir Richard Ratcliffe, to behead the three prisoners at Pomfret; which was accordingly performed, June 13.^a

P.— O Pomfret! Pomfret! O thou bloody prison,
Fatal and ominous to noble peers,
We give thee up our guiltless blood to drink.^b

A.—The protector, still professing to be busy in giving orders for the ensuing coronation of his nephew, was profoundly occupied in paving his way to the throne. Thinking it desirable to obtain the consent of Lord Hastings, he had that nobleman sounded by his creature Catesby, a lawyer of great subtlety of address, who found the lord chamberlain unalterable in his fidelity to the children of his late friend and master. Richard therefore determined to ruin the man whom he could not seduce; and on the very day of the executions at Pomfret, a council was summoned to meet at the Tower. The protector took his seat in the most affable humour imaginable: after paying some compliments to the Bishop of Ely, on the good and early strawberries which that prelate raised in his garden near Holborn, he begged the favour of a dish of them;

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Rich

and the bishop despatched a servant to comply with the request. The protector then entreated the excuse of the council, and withdrew.*

P.—This seems but a trivial circumstance to introduce in a scene of so much importance.

A.—The historian probably mentioned this assumed good-nature of the protector, as affording an instance of his great dissimulation; for returning to the assembly with a severe countenance, knitting his brows, and inflamed with anger, he asked the Lords what punishment those persons deserved who plotted against his life, a man so near in blood to the king? The unconscious Hastings readily replied, that they merited the punishment of traitors. "These traitors," said the protector, "are the sorceress, Edward's wife, and her confederate, that strumpet Shore; see to what a condition they have reduced me," pulling up his sleeve, and showing them his arm, shrivelled and withered. But as the courtiers knew that this infirmity had attended him from his birth, they looked on each other with amazement, being well aware that the queen was far too wise to resort to such undertakings.

P.—And surely, above all people in the world, Jane Shore was the last person whom she would have made her confidant.

A.—Hastings, who since the death of Edward had formed connections with Jane Shore, becoming somewhat alarmed at this extraordinary accusation, said, "Certainly, if they be guilty of such deeds, they deserve the severest punishment." "And dost thou reply to me," said Gloucester, "with your ifs and ands? I tell thee, that they have so done, and that I will prove upon thy body, traitor." And he struck the table with

* Sir T. More.

his hand; at which signal, some one without the apartment crying out, "Treason!" Gloucester said, "I arrest thee, traitor." "What, me, my lord?" returned the terrified chamberlain. "Yea, thee, traitor; and make a short shrift, for, by St. Paul, I will not dine till thy head be brought me." He then broke up the council, arresting also the Bishop of Ely and several of the other members. In the confusion, the soldiers who entered the chamber, aimed a blow, and severely wounded the head of Lord Stanley, who with difficulty saved his life, by crouching under the table.

F.—These circumstances are familiar to most persons, from their popular representation on the stage; but they are so singular as to have excited a considerable portion of wonder, if not of doubt.

A.—The narrator, Sir Thomas More, lived in the family of the Bishop of Ely, the reverend cultivator of the strawberries, who was present at the scene, and who questionless communicated the information. Lord Hastings was hurried away, and instantly beheaded on a timber log, which lay on the Tower wharf.

F.—The fate of Hastings, who by a strange coincidence suffered on the same day as his victims, Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, does not excite any very powerful sympathy: but in what a state of law and liberty must that country be, where such enormities could pass unquestioned.

A.—The protector thought some apology due to the citizens, amongst whom Lord Hastings was very popular. Two hours after his execution, a proclamation was read, but so well penned and fairly written on parchment, that it was impossible to have been got ready in so short a time: a merchant consequently remarked, that it must certainly have been drawn in

the spirit of prophecy. To keep up the farce, or rather the tragedy, Gloucester sent for some substantial citizens to the Tower, to whom he might explain the matter. On their arrival they found the protector and Buckingham armed in such old rusty brigandines, as nothing but the necessity of defending their lives from a sudden attack could have induced them to put on their backs.

F.—Such was the terror inspired by Gloucester, that when he told the citizens that Hastings had conspired to destroy himself and Buckingham, they answered him as if fully convinced of the fact, though they entirely disbelieved it.*

A.—Gloucester, covertly pursuing his design upon the throne, ordered the goods of Jane Shore to be seized, which amounted to two or three thousand marks; and he summoned her before the council, to answer the charge of witchcraft: but failing entirely of all proof in that accusation, he directed her to be tried in the spiritual court for incontinence.†

F.—This was a matter of too great notoriety to be evaded or denied.

A.—The Bishop of London therefore condemned her to perform open penance on the next Sunday, in a procession, before the cross, with a lighted taper in her hand. “She went,” says Sir Thomas More, “in countenance and pace so womanly, that albeit she were out of all array, save her kirtle only, yet looked she so fair and lovely, while the wondering of the people cast a comely red into her cheeks, of which before she had most miss, that her great shame was her great praise, among those that were more amorous of her body than curious of her soul.”

* Sir T. More.

† Ibid.

P.—Yet it is not very apparent how the persecution of the unfortunate Jane Shore could aid the protector's views upon the crown.

A.—The next step of Gloucester was an attempt to prove the illegitimacy of his late brother's children; and though Jane Shore's penance could not effect that object, yet it directed the public attention to the dissoluteness of Edward's conduct, which might lead to a conclusion that he was capable of committing any irregularity, for the purpose of gratifying his passions. Jane Shore, in her old age, is thus described by the same historian: "This woman was born in London, worshipfully provided, honestly brought up, and very well married, saving somewhat too soon; her husband, an honest citizen, young and godly, and of good substance, a goldsmith by profession, but whom she never fervently loved: proper she was, and fair; nothing in her body that you would have changed, but if you would, have wished her somewhat higher: this say they that knew her in her youth. Albeit, some that now see her, for yet she liveth, deem her never to have been well visaged; for she is old, lean, withered and dried up, nothing left but ravelled skin and hard bone: yet being such who so well advise her visage, might guess which parts how filled would make it a fair face."

F.—Sir Thomas More writes with that warmth which becomes the praise of beauty.

A.—He is no less favourable to the qualities of her mind and heart: "Yet men delighted not so much in her beauty as in her pleasant behaviour; for a proper wit she had, and could both read well and write; merry in company; ready and quick of answer; neither mute nor full of babble; sometimes taunting, without displeasure, and not without disport; the favours of the king

she never abused to any man's hurt, but to many a man's comfort and relief; where the king took displeasure she would mitigate; when men were out of favour she would bring them into his grace, for many that had highly offended she obtained pardon; of great forfeitures she got men remission; for these things she had none, or very small rewards, and those rather gay than rich; but at this day she beggeth of many, who at this day had begged if she had not been."

F.—The character of no female, in the previous annals of English history, is so amply or so ably drawn as the portraiture of this Aspasia; and to add to its merit, the melancholy history of this fascinating creature affords a powerful moral. The particular steps which led to the seduction of Jane Shore do not appear.

P.—The popular belief of her deplorable death by hunger, in Shoreditch, is then entitled to no credit.

A.—Not to the least: Jane Shore lived till the eighteenth year of Henry the Eighth, more than forty years after her penance, and then died quietly in her bed. In the parish of Shoreditch, there was anciently a manor house, called Shore, or Shoreditch Place, which common tradition^a related to be the residence of Jane, at which her royal lover used to visit her. But the ancient appellation of the parish was Sording,^b as appears by a grant of King John (1204), of the rectory to the Bishop of London. In the reign of Edward the Third, the lord of the manor was Sir John de Sordich,^c who distinguished himself in the wars with France. The transmutation of the name therefore into Shoreditch is sufficiently obvious, without having recourse to the misfortunes of the beautiful mistress of Edward the Fourth.

^a Stow.

^b Rec. Turriss, M. 8, N. 65.

^c Weever's Monuments.

F.—Jane Shore was an early favourite of the dramatic muse: a play on the subject was acted in 1602, which, though now lost, probably furnished the tradition which yet prevails. In the legend of Jane Shore, in the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559), there is no allusion to her dying in a ditch, though with much pathos she thus deplores her poverty and hapless destitution:

What fall was this, to come from princes' fare,
To watch for crumbs among the blind and lame!
When alms were dealt, I had an hungry share,
Because I knew not how to ask for shame.

An ancient black letter ballad,* of later date, seems to have afforded a hint for the situation and character of Alicia, in Rowe's very pleasing tragedy:

Then unto Mrs. Blague I went,
To whom my jewels I had sent,
In hope thereby to ease my want,
When riches failed and love grew scant.

But she denied to me the same,
When in my need for them I came;
To recompense my former love,
Out of her doors she did me shove.

But yet one friend among the rest,
Whom I before had seen distress,
And saved his life, condemn'd to die,
Did give me food to succour me.

P.—The charitable person thus alluded to, is supposed to have been a baker, who gave the dying heroine a roll; but here the dramatist forsakes his prototype, probably considering such a character and circumstance hardly adequate to the dignity of the buskin.

F.—But the catastrophe was tragical enough:

* *Percy Reliques*, vol. 2.

For which by law it was decreed,
 That he was hanged for that deed;
 His death did grieve me so much more,
 Than had I died myself therefore.
 I could not get one bit of bread,
 Whereby my hunger might be fed;
 Nor drink, but such as channels yield,
 Or stinking ditches in the field.
 The which, now since my dying day,
 Is Shoreditch call'd, as writers say;
 Which is a witness of my sinne,
 For being concubine to a king.

P.—The truth of the events seems then much upon a par with the merit of the poetry.

F.—An original picture of Jane, a lovely figure, almost naked, is preserved at Eton,* and another at King's College, Cambridge, for the contemplation of the provost and fellows of those establishments: an engraving of the former portrait has been published, with the injunction of Gloucester to his friend Lord Hastings as a motto,

Give mistress Shore one gentle kiss the more.

A.—The protector with an undeviating step proceeded in his endeavour to bastardize his late brother's issue. For this purpose he induced Stillington, bishop of Bath and Wells, by pompous promises, to declare that Edward the Fourth, before he espoused Elizabeth Grey, had been privately married to lady Eleanor Talbot, widow of the Lord Butler of Sudely, and daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury. But the bishop specified neither time nor place, and declared that no other witness but himself was present.

F.—Had such a marriage taken place, Eleanor Talbot would hardly have kept it secret from her relatives, who were amongst the first personages of the kingdom. That Edward deluded this lady is sufficiently

* Grainger, Hist.

true; and that Stillington, a profligate young priest, might assist the delusion, is not improbable. Comines says, that the bishop trumped up the story in revenge for Edward's neglect of him. In no Christian country, I should suppose, the law would admit such evidence to invalidate a marriage, after the decease of both the parties.

P.—But besides the issue of Edward, the children of his next brother, Clarence, who laboured under no suspicion of illegitimacy, plainly stood in the order of succession before Gloucester.

A.—Their claims he got rid of, by pleading the attainder of their father, though the rule which excludes attainted blood from inheriting was never extended to the throne. But not content with defeating the rights of the children of both his brothers by these means, he had the unparalleled effrontery to assert that his late brothers themselves were not legitimate, but that their mother the Duchess of York, a princess of irreproachable character, and still living, had received different lovers in her husband's absence, who were the fathers of those two princes, as their resemblance to these supposed paramours sufficiently declared; and the church was the place chosen to sound the people on this indecent topic: Dr. Shaw, the brother of the lord mayor, was appointed to preach at St. Paul's, and he chose for his text on Sunday a passage in the Wisdom of Solomon,* "Bastard slips shall not thrive."

F.—"The devil can quote scripture for his purpose," though it be admitted that the text on this occasion was apochryphal.

A.—It had been arranged, that when the preacher, after having enlarged on those circumstances which

* Chap. iv. ver. 3.

might throw discredit on Edward's marriage, and also on the illegitimacy both of the late king and Clarence, that the protector should enter the church, and the doctor was to exclaim, "Behold this excellent prince, the express image of his noble father, bearing, no less in the virtues of his mind than in the features of his countenance, the marks of his true descent." At which it was expected that the audience would cry out, "God save King Richard;" a salutation which would have immediately been construed into a popular consent. But by a ridiculous mistake, the duke did not appear till this exclamation had been recited, and the doctor was obliged to repeat his rhetorical figure out of its proper place, but with so little effect, that the audience, from a detestation of the proceedings, kept a profound silence.*

F.—Like so many circumstances of this reign, the substance of this celebrated sermon has been much called into question, particularly its revolting indelicacy towards the character of the Duchess of York; and it appears that Sir Thomas More has made a slight mistake, as he asserts that the preacher insisted on the late king's precontract with Elizabeth Lucy; whereas in the subsequent parliament, held after Richard's accession, Edward's marriage was set aside, on the ground of his contract with lady Eleanor Talbot.^b

A.—In fact, there was as much propriety in mentioning one of these ladies as the other, as they had both been seduced by Edward, under a promise of marriage; or the doctor himself might make the mistake, not being intimately acquainted with the secrets of the seraglio. That a very offensive sermon was delivered at St. Paul's, we have the testimony of Fabian,

* Sir T. More.

^b Rot. Parl. vol. 6.

a citizen, and afterwards sheriff of London in 1493, who in all probability was present, and who relates that the preacher used "many disclanderous words in the preferring of the title of the said lord protector, to the great abucion of all the audience, except such as favoured the matter, which were few in number, if the truth or plainness might have been shown." The unsuccessful result of this ridiculous experiment abashed both the protector and his parasite; for Dr. Shaw slunk home, kept himself out of sight "like an owl,"* and was never seen abroad again. Gloucester however was too far advanced to recede from his ambitious purpose; and the Duke of Buckingham, his ready instrument, on the next Tuesday, met the citizens at Guildhall, and rehearsed nearly the same arguments which Dr. Shaw had used at St. Paul's. The citizens remained insensible to the force of his eloquence, which was considerable, and much admired; but no cries of "~~God save~~ King Richard" followed. "What is the meaning of this silence?" said Buckingham to the lord mayor. The magistrate replied, that the citizens were not accustomed to be harangued by any but their recorder, and knew not how to answer a person of the duke's quality. But when the city officer repeated Buckingham's harangue, which he delivered not as his own sentiments, but "thus has the duke inferred," still the audience kept a profound silence. "This is wonderful obstinacy," cried the duke; "will you have the protector for your sovereign, or no?" A few voices of the rabble, mingled with the duke's followers, at length raised the feeble but long desired cry of "God save King Richard." Buckingham taking advantage of this feint, expressed his satisfaction; and inviting the mayor

* Sir T. More.

and citizens to attend upon the protector at Baynard's Castle, took his leave.

P.—These particulars are so vividly depicted by Shakspeare, that all historical painting of them must appear like water colours.

A.—The next day, the mayor and aldermen, with some of the protector's friends, met at Baynard's Castle. Richard, after an affected struggle, and a feigned reluctance, at length accepted the crown, moved by the powerful entreaty of Buckingham, who told him that the free people of England would never crouch to the rule of a bastard; and if the lawful heir refused the sceptre, they knew where to find some other nobleman who would cheerfully accept it.*

P.—Irresistible arguments, indeed!

A.—On the Thursday, all the lords and bishops of the protector's party came to the same place, and in Richard's own words, "‘porrected to him a bill of petition, wherein his sure title and true was evidently set forth and declared.’" Whereupon the king's highness, notably assisted by well near all the lords spiritual and temporal of the realm, went to the palace at Westminster, and in the great hall declared his mind to reign over the people."

F.—Richard however was determined to have some better security than the mere passive consent of the people, for he brought up, chiefly from the north, a military force of at least five thousand men."

A.—No time was to be lost. On Friday, June 27, Richard was proclaimed king, and on the 6th of July, 1483, he was solemnly crowned in Westminster Abbey, with great magnificence, making use of the preparations

* Sir T. More.

† In a letter to Lord Mountjoy at Calais, Harleian MSS. No. 433.

• Hist. Croy. Cont.

which had been designed for his nephew.^a Thus terminated, after a duration of eighty-eight days, the reign of Edward the Fifth. No parliament was called during that period.

F.—Yet an irregular assembly, consisting probably of several members of both houses, met together on June 25th, though not in a due parliamentary form, to whom was presented a roll of parchment,^b by way of bill, in which the crown was claimed by Richard; and this deed was legalised by the parliament, which met in the first year of his reign.^c

A.—On the next day to the proclamation, June 28, Richard created his friend Lord Howard, Duke of Norfolk, with a grant of innumerable manors and lordships from the crown.^d And thus the title, which stood so long, and still stands so proudly, as the first in the list of the English nobility, was conferred as the iniquitous wages of assistance in the foulest and most unprincipled usurpation that ever disgraced the English annals.

P.—Truly an edifying exemplification of the poet's

Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus.

^a Sir T. More.

^b Hist. Croy. Cont.

^c Rot. Parl. vol. 6.

^d Dugdale, Baronage, vol. 2.

DISSERTATION XI.

SECTION III.

RICHARD III. - - - - - A.D. 1483.

A.—IN Shakspeare's tragedy, the first feelings of Richard, on his acquisition of his yet insecure throne, are admirably depicted :

K. Rich.—Stand all apart. Cousin of Buckingham—

Buck.—My gracious sovereign—

K. Rich.—Give me thy hand. Thus high by thy advice,
And thy assistance, is King Richard seated :
But shall we wear these glories for a day ?
Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them ?

Buck.—Still live they, and for ever let them last.

K. Rich.—Ah, Buckingham ! now do I play the touch,
To try if thou be current gold indeed :
Young Edward lives ; think now what I would speak.

Buck.—Say on, my loving lord.

K. Rich.—Why, Buckingham, I say, I would be king.

Buck.—Why, so you are, my thrice renowned liege.

K. Rich.—Ha, am I king ? 'tis so, but Edward lives.

Buck.—True, noble prince.

K. Rich.—O, bitter consequence,
That Edward still should live.*

F.—But we must not suppose that Richard absolutely threw out such hints to the Duke of Buckingham, as the immediate subsequent transactions seem to have been perpetrated without that nobleman's participation.

A.—“Speedily after his coronation,” says Sir Thomas More, “the king made a progress through part of his dominions ; taking his way to Gloucester, he resolved

* Rich. III. act 4.

upon fulfilling the thing, which he before intended; whereupon he sent one John Grene, whom he specially trusted, with a command to Sir Robert Brakenbury, the constable of the Tower, with a letter, that he should in any wise put the two children to death. This John Grene did his errand to Brakenbury, kneeling before our Lady, in the Tower: but Sir Robert plainly answered, that he never would put them to death, to die himself therefore. With which answer Grene returned to the king, who took such displeasure, that the same night he said to a secret page of his, 'Ah, whom shall a man trust; those that I have brought up myself, even those fail me?' 'Sir,' quoth the page, 'there lieth one on your pallet without (meaning Sir James Tyrrel,) who I dare say will do your grace's pleasure: the thing were right hard which he would refuse.'"

F.—The veracity of these particulars has been questioned, on so poor a ground as the date of a writ, which purports to be signed by the king in London, when the historian represents him at Gloucester.

A.—The date of a writ is no proof of the presence of the king, but only of his chancellor. There are writs with a *teste rege** extant, dated at Bristol and Westminster, or other places as remote, on the same day. But to proceed with Sir James Tyrrel: "This man had an high heart, and sore longed upwards, not rising yet so fast as he had hope. Upon the page's words, King Richard arose, and calling up Tyrrel, secretly brake his mind in this mischievous matter;" and sent him with a letter to Brakenbury, desiring the constable to deliver up the keys for one night to Tyrell: with which request Brakenbury complied.

F.—The conduct of Brakenbury is too much pal-

* Rymer, vol. 8, p. 81.

liated, if not even praised, by Hume, who allows the knight to have possessed sentiments of honour; but surely this mode of escaping personal responsibility, by winking at others' wickedness, seems little to deserve such commendations. That Richard considered Brakenbury as a partial accessory, may be inferred from the enormous grants of forfeited lordships and manors with which he was subsequently enriched, as well as the various offices of high trust and emolument which he enjoyed: indeed all the persons concerned in this nefarious transaction were subsequently rewarded.^a

A.—Tyrrel took with him two ruffians, Miles Forest, a "fellow fleshed in murder aforetime;" and John Dighton, a "big, broad, square, and strong knave."

P.—But was not there a "Black Will," who participated in the murder?

A.—William Slaughter, or Slater, seems merely to have been one of the keepers, and to have had no further share in the business than in pointing out the princes' apartment. The murderers entering the chamber at midnight, suffocated the two children with the bed-clothes, Tyrrel waiting at the stair foot: when the deed was completed, he was called up to view the naked bodies, and he ordered them to be buried deep in the ground under the stairs, and a heap of stones to be thrown upon them. Richard, it is said, displeased at the place of his nephews' interment, gave orders to have the bodies removed into holy ground, which was supposed to have been performed by the chaplain of the Tower;^c but as that person died soon after, the place of their burial remained unknown, sufficient search not having been made. In the reign of

^a Kennet, History of England, vol. 1, in a note, page 551.

^b Ibid.

^c Sir T. More.

Charles the Second (1674), in consequence of an order to clear the White Tower, for the reception of a large quantity of records from the Six Clerks' Office, a new pair of stairs was judged convenient for their more easy conveyance. The labourers, digging at the foot of the old stairs, the very spot which was mentioned as the precise place of the first interment of the princes, found, covered over with a heap of stones, the bones of two persons, exactly corresponding in size with the ages of Edward and his brother: they were concluded at the time to be certainly the remains of the young princes, were solemnly reinterred at Westminster Abbey, and a monument, with a suitable inscription, placed over them.^a

F.—Many writers have endeavoured to overthrow this relation of the murder; but I see no rational cause to doubt the result, however some of the minutiae may not be clearly consistent: indeed, what murder was ever proved by circumstances only, without some discrepancy in the evidence?

A.—Forest lived not long after; but in the next reign, both Tyrrel and Dighton confessed the fact.^b It was however so much the interest of Henry the Seventh that witnesses to the non-existence of Edward the Fifth should remain, to refute the pretensions of Perkin Warbeck, that they were not punished for the crime. Tyrrel indeed was executed ten years after for treason.^c It is incredible that these persons would take upon themselves the everlasting odium and infamy of such a transaction, had they not been guilty. A doubt certainly did early prevail, whether the children were destroyed or not in Richard's time; which first originated from the non-appearance of the deceased bodies, and was strength-

^a Kennet, vol. 1, note, page 551.

^b Sir T. More.

^c *Ibid.*

ened by the imposition of Perkin Warbeck, who for some time successfully personated the young Duke of York : "which imposition," says Sir Thomas More, "by many folk's malice, and more folk's folly, so long abused the world." But he prefaces his relation of the murder, by saying, "I shall rehearse to you the dolorous end of those babes, not after every way that I have heard, but after that way that I have so heard, by such men, and by such means as me thinketh it were hard but it should be true." And he adds in another place, "These things have I learned of them that much knew, and little cause had to lye."

F.—The first defender of Richard against this charge was Buck, who wrote in the reign of Charles the First, and who seems to have endeavoured to wash the black-moor white, from the circumstance of his own ancestor having perished at Bosworth Field, fighting for the usurper.

A.—Buck's history is so manifestly adapted to his prejudices, with an impudent disregard to the most acknowledged facts, that it is totally unworthy of attention. The tory historian, Mr. Carte, in his elaborate work, seems to palliate Richard's crimes from his dislike of the principle on which Henry the Seventh acquired the crown—an appeal to the nation.

F.—The whig Horace Walpole, lord Orford, could be actuated by no such feeling.

A.—His "Historic Doubts," an ingenious but strange compound of paradox and research, confuses, but does not convince; and the best of it is, that from a hint or two unwarily escaping, the author was no convert to his own logic. The masterly refutation of Walpole's arguments by Mr. Hume, is a truly triumphant specimen of analysis and reason. Another champion for Richard

was Mr. Laing, in a dissertation inserted in Dr. Henry's history; which is a mere piece of dead special pleading, and is well demolished by Dr. Lingard.

P.—Richard no doubt would endeavour to prevent the particulars of such a transaction from transpiring.

F.—Certainly; but had not those eminent persons, who united in calling over the Earl of Richmond, been convinced of the death of these children, their conduct would have exposed them to the imputation of absolute madness; the partizans of the house of York applying to a Lancastrian prince to defeat the pretensions of these innocent heirs of their favourite family, and plunging the nation in the misery of those dreadful civil wars from which it had so recently escaped.

A.—One of Walpole's arguments, is his attributing to Sir Thomas More a desire to flatter the reigning dynasty, by depreciating the character of their predecessors of the house of York. But surely the honesty of the man, who, rather than comply with the injunctions of a tyrant, preferred to lose his head, was proof against all inferior temptation; besides, More even praises Edward the Fourth above his deserts: and the fatal result has the concurrent testimony of all the contemporary authorities. The Monk of Croyland, a cool and unprejudiced historian, writing within a year after the death of Richard, declares that soon after the coronation, a rising was about to take place in the young princes' favour, when a report became public that one or both had perished; though it was not known exactly by what kind of violent death they died. Fabian says, the prince, or of right, King Edward, with his brother the Duke of York, were put under such sure keeping within the Tower, in such wise that they never came abroad after. John Rous, the antiquary of Warwick, asserts

that they were martyred, though it was known to very few by what death they suffered; and Comines expressly accuses Richard of murdering his nephews, and relates that the French king, Louis the Eleventh, no very scrupulous person, would not answer his letters nor receive his messages, esteeming him cruel and wicked.

F.—All these authorities could not be in a confederacy to flatter the house of Tudor: had the guilt of Richard been merely imaginary, we may be well assured that the progress of time would long ere this have discovered documents and family papers sufficient for his vindication.

A.—Excellent Fuller^a sums up his opinion, by saying, that “to pervert people’s judgments in sober sadness, and therein go against all received records (referring to Buck’s singularity), is the least fault that can be laid to such men’s charge;” besides, he adds with equal wit and truth, “There are some birds, sea-pies, that cannot rise except it be by flying against the wind.”

F.—That observation will not apply to Walpole, whose work is remarkable for penetration and shrewdness, and excited very general attention.

A.—There is little cause to envy Richard the possession of a throne acquired at such a price. “After the murder,” continues the same historian,^b “he never had a quiet mind: when he went abroad, his eyes whirled about, his body being privily fenced; his hand ever on his dagger, plucking it up and down in its sheath; his countenance and manner like one always ready to strike again; he took ill rest a-nights; lay long waking and musing, sore wearied with care and watch; rather slumbered than slept; troubled with fearful dreams; and suddenly would he sometimes start

^a Church Hist.

^b Sir T. More.

up and run about the chamber." Richard was again crowned at York, September 8th, for the gratification of his subjects in the northern part of the kingdom, amongst whom he had always been popular; but murmurings had arisen in his absence, and the Duke of Buckingham, from some unknown cause of disgust or apprehension, had withdrawn to Brecknock.*

P.— O let me think on Hastings, and be gone
To Brecknock, while my fearful head is on.

A.—The causes of the defection of this nobleman are variously related: in Shakspeare's play, following Hall and Holinshed, the duke is represented as dissatisfied at the refusal of Richard to grant him the moiety of the estate of the Bohuns, earls of Hereford, now vested in the crown; from which family Buckingham was descended, and inherited the other moiety. But it appears from authentic records,^b that this claim had been granted, though perhaps it might still want the sanction of parliament.

F.—Envy might have been the cause; as after Richard obtained the crown, Buckingham's "eye could not abide the sight, but he *wried* his head another way."

P.—Fear was more probably the instigator; as Buckingham might very justly apprehend that Richard, jealous of his great power and wealth, would treat him with as little ceremony as he had exercised against Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan, or his friend Lord Hastings.

A.—The Bishop of Ely, since his apprehension at the council in the Tower, had been intrusted to the charge of Buckingham; and it is exceedingly probable that this wise and artful prelate had instilled into the mind of his keeper those c

els which wrought the

* Hist. Croy. Cont.

* Sir T. More.

change; for it is generally thought that the plan of dethroning Richard, by proposing a marriage between Henry Tudor, earl of Richmond, and Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward the Fourth, originated in his subtle brain.^a To this judicious scheme Buckingham acceded; and all the chief partizans of the rival houses rejoiced in the prospect of extinguishing for ever the flames of discord. But a conspiracy so widely extended did not escape the vigilance of Richard, who, with his usual alacrity, immediately appeared in arms. Buckingham gave the signal of insurrection in Wales, but was prevented from joining his associates in various parts of England, by the violence of the greatest deluge, occasioned by incessant rains, that had ever been known in England, and remembered for a hundred years after by the name of the Great Water, or Buckingham's Flood:^b it obtained for ten days; men, women, and children, were carried down the torrent in their beds, and the water covered the tops of considerable hills. Buckingham's soldiers being thus prevented from crossing the Severn, and also ill provided, soon broke up; the duke took refuge with an ancient servant, Humfrey Banaster, near Shrewsbury. Richard immediately offered a thousand pounds in money, or a hundred a year in land, for his apprehension. Seduced by the reward, Banaster betrayed his guest and master to John Mytton, the sheriff of Shropshire,^c who with a strong power of men in harness, apprehended the crest-fallen peer in a little grove adjoining to the dwelling, and conveyed him, apparelled in a pilled black cloth,^d to Shrewsbury, and thence to Salisbury, where Richard immediately ordered his execution. Buckingham strenuously, but

^a Sir T. More.^c Hist. Croy. Cont.^b Hall.^d Hall.

in vain, sought an interview, with the intention, as his son afterwards said, of "putting his knife into him:" but the wary Richard declined the danger.

P.—It is impossible to feel any very great sympathy for the Duke of Buckingham; and his career indeed terminated in the precise way which his unprincipled assistance to the views of the usurper amply deserved.

F.—Yet his fate caused a considerable sensation, evinced by the many ballads and legends composed on his misfortunes. His high birth, immense possessions, and showy attainments, procured for his person a considerable degree of favour. It is gratifying to see, in these metrical compositions, the universal abhorrence of Banaster's treachery, to which they attribute the ruin which befel that faithless servant and all his family. An old chronicler,* in plain prose, thus relates their fate: "His eldest son waxing mad, died in a hog's sty; his eldest daughter, of excellent beauty, was suddenly stricken with a foul leprosy; his second son became deprived of the use of his limbs; his youngest was strangled and drowned in a puddle;" and to complete the climax, Banaster himself, in extreme old age, was arraigned and found guilty of murder, but saved from execution by his clergy.

A.—Richard, in his proclamation offering the reward for apprehending Buckingham, affects a prodigious zeal for morals and religion, calling his enemies traitors, adulterers, and bawds; he expresses the most violent indignation against the Marquis of Dorset,^b who, together with the Bishop of Ely, had luckily made his escape beyond sea, upbraiding him with various gallantries, particularly his connection with that "unshameful and mischievous woman called Shore's wife;" which hypo-

* Hall.

^b Rymer, vol. 12.

crisis, as the king himself was far from immaculate in these matters, was truly laughable. Several of the conspirators fell into Richard's hands, and many were executed: "So many great men, both peers and commoners, were proscribed," says one author,^a "as had never been known since the triumvirate of Octavius, Anthony, and Lepidus." The most noted sufferer was William Collingbourne, who lost his life for the quibbling distich satirizing Richard and his ministers:

The cat, the rat, and Lovel, that dog,
Rule all England under the hog.^b

Alluding to the names of Ratcliff and Catesby, and to Richard's armorial device, a boar.

F.—Lovel, be it known, was a common name for a dog at this period, as appears from an old interlude called the "Historie of Jacob and Esau," (1568), in which Ragau, the servant of Esau, mimicking the commands of his master, says,

Then come on at once, take my quiver and my bowe,
Fette Lovell my hound, and my horne to blow.

A.—The Earl of Richmond, who had sailed from St. Malo, with a force of five thousand men, was driven back by a storm; and hearing of the dispersion of his friends, returned to Britany, not hazarding an attempt to land.

P.—What were the pretensions of the earl to dispute the crown with Richard?

A.—It has been stated that John of Gaunt, fourth son of Edward the Third, in the last year of his life espoused his mistress, Catherine Swyneford; and that his children by that lady were legitimated by act of parliament, with an express reservation, barring all claim to the crown. This family assumed the name of

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^b Hall.

^c Hist. Croy. Cont.

Beaufort: its head was created first earl, then duke of Somerset; it ended in a female, the "venerable Margaret," countess of Richmond and Derby, well remembered for her munificent endowments at Cambridge, and her divinity lectures in both universities. This lady had married Edmund Tudor, earl of Richmond, now deceased, son of Sir Owen, and of Katharine, the French princess; and the young earl was their only child. It is clear that nothing but the extremity of the Lancastrian party could ever have induced any one to conceive that Henry possessed any claim in blood to the throne, as there were many princes and princesses existing in Spain, the legitimate descendants of John of Gaunt.

F.—But even Edward the Fourth was very jealous of this imaginary title, and nearly contrived the means of getting Henry into his hands, from which he escaped by a sort of miracle; for having been given up to an envoy by the Duke of Britany, in whose custody he at that time remained, a sudden thought struck the duke, of Edward's murderous intentions, and he recalled his charge.*

A.—Richard, now triumphant in every quarter, and strengthened by the unsuccessful attempt to dethrone him, at length ventured to summon a parliament, January 23, 1484, who chose Catesby for their speaker; and that assembly, particularly subservient to the will of the stronger party at this era, pronounced Richard "undoubted king of the realm of England, as well by right of consanguinity and inheritance, as by lawful election, consecration, and coronation:" and all the members took an oath to support the succession of his son Edward, a youth twelve years of age, now created Prince of Wales. They declared the marriage of Edward the Fourth with Elizabeth Grey illegal, stating

that it was brought about by sorcery and witchcraft, which they would undertake to prove; and bastardizing the issue, on the ground of Edward's precontract with Eleanor Butler, the daughter of the "ould Earl of Shrewsbury:" thus saving themselves the trouble of an inquiry into the fate of the murdered princes. The claims of the children of the Duke of Clarence were set aside by the attainder of their father.*

F.—Parliaments have passed acts more cruel, but none more infamous. "It requires ages of virtue," says Voltaire, "to repair such baseness."

A.—My good friend, you are treading on the verge of treason; for though words spoken can incur no greater punishment than a premunire, yet should our conversation by any chance get into print, you would be fortunate to escape with your head.

F.—How so?

A.—By the statute of Anne 6, c. 7, any person denying that the kings of this realm, with the authority of parliament, are not able to make laws and statutes to bind the crown and the descent thereof, such persons shall be guilty of high treason.

P.—Good God! this must have been a mere bugbear to frighten the Jacobites.

A.—You are entirely mistaken; for you may peruse in the State Trials,^b if pity and indignation will permit you, the case of one John Mathews, a printer's apprentice, nineteen years of age, who was convicted upon this statute, and executed in 1719, for printing a treasonable pamphlet, entitled *Vox Populi, Vox Dei*.

F.—And this after the age of Milton and Locke! Well, I am by no means inclined to dispute with the master of thirty legions, and henceforth I will assuredly

* Rot. Parl. vol. 6.

^b Vol. 9, page 680.

not deny the power of parliaments, either in the days of Richard the Third or of Queen Anne.

P.—The statute of Anne was perhaps but temporary, owing to the peculiar exigency of the occasion.

A.—It was a revival of a statute of Elizabeth, by which the offence was made capital during the life of that princess. The exigency, such as it is, has subsisted from the reign of Queen Anne to the present moment.

F.—Let us no longer talk of the barbarity of the laws of our ancestors in the times of the Plantagenets. But as this just and legal settlement of the crown on the person and family of Richard was, in less than two years, superseded by another settlement equally just and legal on his rival, it would be curious to inquire which of the two was registered in heaven's chancery?

A.—Richard's parliament attainted the Earl of Richmond and all his friends; but they passed some good and popular laws, particularly one against extorting money from the subject by way of benevolence: an excellent provision, though ill observed, as Richard soon violated his own enactment.* At this period (April 9), he lost his son. "Both the king and queen," says a contemporary historian, "were so much affected, that they almost run mad."† The health of the latter indeed never recovered the shock; and though Richard, from the general tenor of his conduct, was suspected of having hastened her death by various means, there is certainly no sort of evidence for such a crime.

F.—Yet it is very justly imagined that, during the queen's illness, he had conceived the project of turning the event of her death to his advantage; for Queen Elizabeth Grey, with her five daughters, still continuing

* Hist. Croy. Cont.

† Ibid.

• Polydore Vergil.

in the sanctuary at Westminster, Richard, for the purpose of inducing her to leave this retreat, exhibited the extraordinary spectacle of a king of England swearing before an assembly of spiritual and temporal peers, with the lord mayor and aldermen, that he would not murder five innocent young ladies, the daughters of his own brother, but would provide for them a revenue of two hundred marks, and marry them to gentlemen.*

A.—The Princess Elizabeth was brought to court during the life of Richard's wife: she appeared on public occasions, dressed in the same manner as the queen;† and she is said by one author,‡ from a very doubtful MS. letter, to have expressed impatience of the lingering delay which obstructed her elevation to the throne. The project of Richard's marriage with his niece, though unusual and incestuous, could yet be brought about by a dispensation from the Pope; and his union with Elizabeth would have given him, as it afterwards did to Henry the Seventh, somewhat of a legal title to the throne. It may be uncertain whether the young princess were pleased or horrified with the proposal; but Richard entirely gained over her mother: and Queen Elizabeth Grey actually wrote to her son, the Marquis of Dorset, commanding him to withdraw from the Earl of Richmond,§ for which piece of friendship the earl most deservedly never forgave her.

P.— Relenting fool, and shallow changing woman.

A.—The nation had now become generally discontented, not from any particular misgovernment, but from a natural sentiment of abhorrence at Richard's crimes; and this projected alliance with his niece, as it would have extinguished every hope of the late confe-

* See the oath in Kennet, vol. 1, p. 552.

† Hist. Croy. Cont.

‡ Buck.

§ Hall.

deracy, naturally urged the Earl of Richmond to renew his preparations for an invasion; and consequently having recruited in France a small army of about two thousand men, he landed with them at Milford Haven, August 7th, 1485. The Welsh, who considered him as their countryman,^a flocked to his standard, and his cause immediately wore a favourable aspect. Richard, haunted with doubts and fears of the treachery of those about him, had taken his post at Nottingham, not knowing in what part of the kingdom to expect the invader. The Duke of Norfolk was the only nobleman sincerely attached to his cause. Richard particularly dreaded Lord Stanley, and his brother Sir William, who had raised numerous forces amongst their retainers in Cheshire and Lancashire.

F.—Considering that Lord Stanley had married the venerable Margaret, the mother of Richmond, the apprehensions of Richard were very reasonable; nor can we blame him for detaining Lord Strange, the eldest son of Stanley, as a hostage for his father's fidelity; and narrowly did he escape the jaws of destruction, Richard deferring an order for his execution till after the battle.^b

A.—Richard is thought to have too much despised his enemy,^c and to have been too dilatory in his preparations. The two rivals at last approached each other. On Sunday, August 22, Richard marched out of Leicester in great pomp, with the crown upon his head,^d and encamped that evening at the abbey of Merrival, not far from Bosworth. The fearful dreams, so highly wrought in Shakspeare, were not of the poet's invention, but rather the deep shadow of an approaching cloud;

^a Hist. Croy. Cont.

^c Fabian.

^b Ibid.

^d Hist. Croy. Cont.

and are mentioned by the historian, as well as his want of alacrity on the morning of the battle. The armies lay so near each other, that in the night several of Richard's soldiers deserted. At the dawn of day, the royal army was drawn up with as broad a front as possible,^a and was double in number that of its adversaries, though the exact amount on both sides is differently related. The battle was fought on Bosworth Field, or more properly on Red Moor Plain, an open space. A general torpor pervaded the king's forces: the Earl of Northumberland and his men did not strike a stroke.^b Soon after the battle began, Lord Stanley who had placed his powers at Atherstone, a village at some distance, in a situation which enabled him to join either party, declared for Richmond; and Sir William Stanley attacking the royal army in flank, threw it into such dismay and confusion, that Richard at once determined to decide the contest by his own death or that of his competitor: whom descrying at a distance, he shouted "Treason! treason! treason!"^c and putting spurs to his horse, killed Sir William Brandon, the standard-bearer, and dismounted Sir John Cheney;^d but when on the point of assaulting Richmond, who neither courted nor declined the combat, he was overwhelmed by numbers, and fell desperately fighting to the last.

F.—The result evidently declares the sort of estimation in which Richard was held; how else possibly could Richmond, an inexperienced soldier, with an army ill-provided, and confessedly the most ragged and dissolute crew ever seen in England,^e obtain such a victory over superior forces, led by an able and valiant commander.

^a Hall. ^b Hist. Croy. Cont. ^c Rous. ^d Hist. Croy. Cont. ^e Comines.

A.—Not more than a hundred fell on the side of Richmond; about a thousand of the royal army were slain. The body of the king was stripped naked, laid across a horse, behind a pursuivant at arms, named *Blanche Sanglier*, or *White Boar*, and carried all besmeared with blood and dirt to Leicester, amidst the insulting shouts of the spectators, where it was buried in the church of *Grey Friars*,^a in that city, with little ceremony. His stone coffin, at the dissolution of the monasteries, was converted into a water trough for horses.^b

F.—Amongst the number of the slain was the Duke of Norfolk, who thus paid the price of his guilty acquiescence in Richard's usurpation. He was warned of the approaching catastrophe by a distich placed upon his tent the night before the battle:

*Jockey of Norfolk, be not too bold,
For Dickon thy master is bought and sold.^c*

Alluding to the foreseen defection, as it is supposed, of Lord Stanley.

A.—Brakenbury and Ratcliffe were also slain; and Catesby being taken prisoner was beheaded. Lord Lovell escaped, but it is supposed that he fell, three years after, in the insurrection at Stoke (1487), as from that time he was seen no more. A tradition prevails, that he took refuge in a secret and strong chamber in his own house, the access to which being unknown to his servants, he was there starved to death; though Hall says that, attempting to escape, he was drowned in the river. Thus the chief actors of Richard's reign were finally disposed of.

F.—A domestic sketch, as it relates to an ancestor of our late noble and energetic poet, will not be read

^a Hall.

^b Nicholls's *Leicester*, vol. 1, p. 299.

^c Hall.

without interest. Sir John Byron and Sir Gervase Clifton were friends and neighbours in Nottinghamshire. Byron joined Henry, Clifton fought with Richard. They had agreed that, whichever party triumphed, the survivor should intercede with the conqueror for his friend's estate. In the midst of the battle, Byron saw Clifton fall in the opposite ranks; he ran to him, sustained him on his shield, and entreated him to surrender. Clifton faintly exclaimed, "All is over; remember your promise, use your interest that my lands be not taken from my children," and presently expired. Byron performed his promise, and the estate was preserved to the Clifton family.*

A.—Richard enjoyed the fruits of his crimes scarcely two years and two months: his general character, from the extreme popularity of Shakspeare's tragedy, is indelibly fixed in the minds of the people of England; but though he did not possess quite that bustling alacrity in murder as depicted by the poet, and though we must exempt him from some of the charges exhibited on the scene, yet his portrait is, in its main features, unquestionably just.

F.—Let not the destroyer of his brother's children escape the eternal stamp of reprobation,

Sin, death, and hell, have set their marks upon him;

from which, like Cain, he can never be released, let his apologists attempt it as they may.

A.—They have endeavoured, not only to vindicate his actions, but to beautify his person. We may suppose that the story of his having remained in his mother's womb two years, and that he came into the world with teeth, and long hair down to the shoulders,¹ is mere anile gossip. Rous, a contemporary, describes

* Hutton, Bosworth Field, p. 117.

¹ Rous.

him as having one shoulder higher than the other, his face short, his stature low, his countenance cruel. Sir Thomas More represents him as little of stature, ill featured of limbs, crook-backed, his left shoulder higher than his right, and hard-favoured of visage; to which Fuller adds, a "prominent gobber tooth." More also relates his habit, that when he stood musing, he would bite and chew his nether lip. Walpole,* without giving us his authority, contradicts this description by the testimony of the old Countess of Desmond, who lived till the reign of James the First, and who attained the age of one hundred and forty. This lady had danced with Richard at the court of Edward the Fourth, and she declared that he was the handsomest man in the room, except his brother.

F.—There is no getting rid of the contemporary description, even supposing it a little overcharged. If the countess could discern small difference between Edward the Fourth, incontestibly one of the very handsomest men that Europe ever saw, and the diminutive Richard, we may conclude that her eyes were dazzled by the lustre of a royal partner, or what is more probable, that when she made the communication she was become superannuated.

A.—Whatever difference of opinion may exist concerning Richard's person, there is none as to his capacity. All writers agree, that as his ambition was boundless, so his talents were of the first order: no person but himself could have succeeded in such a design upon the English crown; his address was masterly, his dissimulation profound, his power of persuasion irresistible, and he possessed personal courage in a very high degree. A determined enemy says, "Though small in

* Historic Doubts.

stature and strength, Richard was a noble knight, and defended himself to the last breath with eminent valour."* Sir Thomas More, in imitation of the point and antithesis of Tacitus, forcibly represents him as "close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable when he inwardly hated, not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill."

F.—The battle of Bosworth was the last of fifteen fought between the contending houses of York and Lancaster; and though one of the least sanguinary, was the most important, as it for ever put an end to that dismal contest.

A.—Richard is the only monarch in England since the Conquest who has fallen in the field of battle. He left no legitimate posterity; but the story of one of his natural children is so remarkable, as to claim our attention. In a letter from Dr. Brett to Dr. Warren, 1720,^b the writer relates, that he waited on the Earl of Winchelsea, at Eastwell, in Kent, who showed him the register-book of that parish, which contained the following entry:

"Richard Plantagenet was buried the 22nd December, 1550."

A tradition ran in the earl's family, that when Sir Thomas Moyle built Eastwell Palace, he observed the chief bricklayer reading at his leisure hours in a book, which on examination he found to be written in Latin. Surprised at this, he inquired into his history; and the workman looking on Sir Thomas as his friend, told him that he would trust him with a secret which he had never before revealed to any one. He said that he had been bred till sixteen at a Latin school, and all he

* Rous.

^b Peck, *Desid. Curiosa*, vol. 2.

knew of himself was, that a gentleman, who declared that he was of no kin to him, paid his board. That one day this gentleman took him to a great house, where a man finely dressed, with a star and garter, came to him, spoke to him kindly, and gave him some money; and that then he was taken back to his school. Soon after, the former gentleman took him into the country, just before the battle of Bosworth, and carried him to the royal tent. He then found that his friend with the star and garter was King Richard, who told him that he was his father, and that he was going to fight for his crown and life. "If I win," said he, "as I hope I shall, come to me, and I will own you; if I lose, take this purse of money, and shift for yourself as well as you can, for to me and to mine will no mercy be shown." Finding the battle lost, and his wretched parent's corpse thrown naked across a horse, he sold his clothes, concealed what he had learned, and having some genius towards architecture, he had become master-bricklayer, and by that trade had lived ever since.

Affected with this narrative, Sir Thomas would have taken him into his family; but the old Plantagenet declined the offer, and only begged permission to build a small cottage near the seat of his benefactor. He obtained his wish, and there he spent his latter days. This interesting dwelling had been pulled down by the father of the nobleman, Lord Winchelsea, who related the story, and who said, with a becoming sensibility, that he would sooner have demolished Eastwell Palace.

F.—With Richard terminated the dynasty of the Plantagenets, after a swav. from the accession of Henry the Second, of 1 hundred and thirty-one years. A race of pri

members of most other families, were wise, and others foolish; some valiant, and others cowardly: but on the whole, talent and courage preponderated. This family was not distinguished by any hereditary characteristic feature, as its successors the Tudors, by the vigour of their mind. Under the Plantagenet rule, though England eminently evinced its superiority in arms over France, it otherwise exhibited no remarkable epoch of national prosperity or happiness, but on the contrary, many periods of great suffering and calamity.

A.—Of the fourteen sovereigns of this house, six perished by a violent death. Rapin, in recapitulating its history, most absurdly attributes all the accidents which befel the posterity of Edward the Third, to the effect of the divine vengeance for the murder of Edward the Second; as if he could fathom the judgments of the Almighty.

F.—But that a certain fatality attended its extinction, is obvious; for we may observe, that after the wars of the Roses once commenced, every male of the family, except Edward the Fourth and the young son of Richard the Third, perished by violence.

A.—Though the race of Plantagenet kings ended in Richard, a male representative of this illustrious family still existed, in the person of the young Earl of Warwick, son of the Duke of Clarence. This unfortunate person, from early youth, had been so secluded in confinement from the ways of men, and kept in such profound ignorance, that according to the historian,^a he knew not a goose from a capon. He was at last barbarously executed by Henry the Seventh, on a most groundless pretence,^b and with him ended the name of Plantagenet.

^a Polydore Vergil.

^b *Ibid.*

P.—By what right did Henry succeed to the crown, on the death of Richard?

A.—He at first assumed the regal power by a sort of military election: Richard's crown having been picked up by a soldier, and secreted in a bush, was discovered by Sir Reginald Bray, and delivered to Sir William Stanley, who, placing it on the head of Henry, the victorious soldiers shouted, "Long live King Henry the Seventh!"* But his promise to marry the Princess Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward the Fourth, and the legitimate heiress to the English throne, was his only secure, or indeed intelligible title.

F.—From the conquest to Richard the Third, inclusive, the number of the kings of England is eighteen, of whom precisely one half acquired the throne without an hereditary right; so that if, at the departure of the Romans, Britain was called by St. Jerom a province fertile of tyrants, it may since, with great justice, be said to have been fruitful of usurpers.

P.—Such a conclusion naturally leads to the question, of what nature was the ancient constitution of England, which could admit of such violent aggressions?

A.—That a principle of hereditary right formed the basis of the monarchy, is apparent from the struggles which, in a greater or smaller degree, ever existed till the restoration of the lawful heir; but it must be acknowledged, that present possession, backed with ability, for that was the main point, was always sufficient to secure the crown to its wearer, provided he could make himself feared; for however preferable might be the title of the house of Mortimer, it was the weakness of Henry the Sixth alone which lost him the diadem. In remarkable confirmation of this opinion, was the deposition of Edward the Second and of Richard

* Hall.

the Second, princes almost equally weak as Henry, but who reigned by the most undisputed title.

P.—Whatever might be the mode of acquiring the crown, what security was there for the people, and what are the pretensions of the ancient English government to be considered as free?

F.—Before that question can be properly answered, let us ascertain what is really meant by a free constitution; and if we admit the definition of Blackstone,* that it consists in the right of personal liberty, in the right of personal security, and in the right to private property, we must then enquire, what remedy the ancient constitution of England afforded when these rights were invaded?

A.—And here I doubt that the most determined advocate for the antiquity of English liberty must shake his head. We have seen that the Anglo-Saxon freeholders, and no other class of that community, enjoyed a considerable degree of personal freedom; but these vaunted and partial advantages were completely overthrown by the Norman conquest, as, in addition to the feudal burthens imposed by that event, the personal despotism of the Conqueror and his immediate successor was never surpassed in any part of modern Europe; and when the power of the monarch became subsequently relaxed, it seems to have been assumed by the nobility, the virtual and real power of the government residing for several centuries in the aristocracy, who under a weak monarch never failed to exhibit their own pretensions, with small regard to the interests of the people, over whom they tyrannized with a reckless authority, more grievous, because more minute and incessant, than any exercise of the sovereign power.

F.—What degree of security a private man could

* Book 1, chap. 1.

expect against the undefined force of the royal prerogative, we may judge from the high constable possessing a summary power, at his own discretion, of putting even the greatest nobleman to death, without noise, or observing the forms of law. In the commission to the Earl of Rivers, of that office, such an authority is expressly declared; and it is therein asserted, that it had so been exercised in cases of *crimen læsæ majestatis*, from the time of William the Conqueror.*

P.—Giving up the two points of personal liberty and security, surely the power which parliament possessed of granting or withholding any extraordinary supplies, must have guaranteed the subject from the grievance of fiscal oppressions.

A.—The property of individuals was certainly more secure than their persons, as it has been, and still is, in many states strictly despotic. The statute *de tallagio non concedendo* of Edward the First, was a considerable restriction on the frequent grasping rapacity of the court, and was the lever which has since in later times been used with such admirable constitutional effect, in wresting various privileges from the necessities of the monarch. Indeed parliament, from the first passing of the statute till the accession of the house of York, applied it frequently in a gentle way to the same purpose; but during the sway of that house, these assemblies seemed to forget or be ignorant of the vast value and political force of their powerful instrument.

P.—If the constitution of England afforded so little personal freedom during the fifteenth century, how are we to account for the excessive commendation bestowed upon the laws by Sir John Fortescue, in his famous treatise, *De Laudibus Legum Angliæ*.

* Kymer, vol. 11, page 582.

A.—Excessive indeed, for the venerable Judge, with that indiscriminate panegyric so common to his profession, asserted that the laws and customs of England were not only good, but the best that could be;^a we ought to recollect however that he was writing to inculcate a particular doctrine upon the understanding of his pupil, the unfortunate Prince Edward, son of Henry the Sixth, and to inspire him with a just preference of the trial by jury, before the method of written allegations, as practised in France, following the example of the civil law, which some of the ministers of Henry the Sixth were desirous of introducing into England; and he very feelingly deplores the cruelty and injustice of torture, as admitted by that system of jurisprudence.

F.—But this theme could be insisted on with no very good grace; since a few years before, the celebrated rack, still to be seen in the Tower, called the Duke of Exeter's daughter, was introduced by that nobleman when high constable.^b It surely mattered little to the sufferer, whether his torments were called legal or illegal, as they were inflicted upon him with the most perfect impunity; and nearly for two centuries after this period, we meet with occasional examples of torture in various modes of application.

A.—But when the Duke of Buckingham was stabbed by Felton, in the reign of Charles the First, and it was proposed in the privy council, by Archbishop Laud, to put the assassin to the rack, the judges declared unanimously that no such proceeding was allowable by the laws of England.^c

F.—Yet so late as the year 1614, one Peacham^d underwent the torture; and during the whole reign of James the First, an officer existed called the master of

^a Cap. 17.

^b Coke, 3 Ins. p. 35.

^c Rushworth, Coll. 1.

^d Dalrymple, Memorials, p. 58.

of the rack.^a It thus appears, since that instrument could be so easily introduced by Henry the Sixth, against the declared opinion of an eminent lawyer, that the early English constitution afforded no security against the practice of torture, had the previous monarchs thought fit to employ it; and indeed it is the opinion of the learned and acute Judge Barrington, that it was not infrequently resorted to.^b

A.—Fortescue well understood the value of the House of Commons, as the guardian of the public purse; since, in another of his treatises, "The Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy," he has still more fully than in his *De Laudibus*, pointed out the disadvantages, especially in the article of taxation, of a *dominium regale*, as exercised in an absolute monarchy like that of France under Louis the Eleventh, and the benefits of a *dominium politicum et regale*, or a limited monarchy, as exercised in England.

F.—It is not a little curious, as was observed in another place,^c that a lawyer like Fortescue, who had been chief justice of the Court of King's Bench, should, in both his works, derive this limitation from the conditions agreed on between Brutus the Trojan and his companions, when they invaded Britain.

A.—Fortescue's intentions were highly praiseworthy, though we cannot accord to him the merit of a very sound judgment. Passing by that he maintained both sides of the question in the dispute of the two Roses, he draws up, in support of his theory, a contrast between France and England, terribly at variance between the more sober relation of other contemporary writers. "The Commons of France," says he, "are so impoverished and destroyed, that they can scarcely live; they drink water; they eat apples, with bread right

^a Barrington, *Observations on the Statutes*. ^b *Ibid.* ^c Vol. I, p. 24.

brown, made of rye; they eat no flesh, but a little lard, or the fat of bacon, or the entrails and heads of beasts, slain for the nobles and merchants of the land :"^a whilst on the other hand, he represents the inhabitants of England as "rich in gold and silver, and in all the necessaries and conveniencies of life; they eat plentifully of all kinds of fish and flesh, with which their country abounds; they drink no water, unless upon a religious score; they are well provided with all sorts of household goods and implements of husbandry; and every one, according to his rank, has all things conducive to make life easy and happy."^b But instead of this flattering picture, there is great evidence to prove that numbers of the poor in years of scarcity often died of hunger, or of diseases contracted by the use of unwholesome food, as they were accustomed to collect herbs and roots, which they dried and made into bread.^c Æneas Sylvius, afterwards Pope Pius the Second, relates in one of his letters,^d that none of the inhabitants of a populous village in Northumberland, in which he lodged (1437), had ever seen either wine or wheaten bread, and that they expressed great surprise when they beheld these delicacies at his table.

F.—To corroborate this view of the case, we may quote the fare of that respectable yeoman, Piers Plowman, before he had gathered in his harvest:

I have no penny, quod Piers, pullets for to buy,
 Ne neither goose, ne grys,^e but two green cheeses,
 A few curds and cream, and an haver^f cake,
 And two loaves of beans and bran, bake for my folk,
 And yet I say, by my soul, I have no salt bacon,
 But I have paraley and porets,^g and many cole plants;
 And eke a cow and a calf, and a cart mare,

^a Monarchy, chap. 3; and De Laudibus, c. 35. ^b De Laud. cap. 36.

^c Hist. Croy. Cont.

^d Opera Pii Secundi, p. 5.

^e Pig.

^f Oaten.

^g Leeks.

To draw a-field my dung, the while the drought lasteth;
 And by this live-lod^a I must live till Lammas time,
 By that I hope to have my harvest in croft,
 And then I may dight^b my dinner as my dear liketh.^c

Though we admit that honest Piers is undervaluing the contents of his store-room, in order to drive away an importunate and craving guest, yet the materials which composed the fare for "his folk," we may suppose to have been the common diet of labourers in his time. Haver cake and loaves of beans and bran ill accord with the luxury described by Fortescue: and it appears from a subsequent line in the poem, that "old wortes, or cabbage," was a usual dinner. This would be considered as no very substantial diet in any age.

A.—The tenure by villenage, which condemned the greater part of the peasantry to a state of bondage, admitted no great share of enjoyment; and this continued till the reign of the Tudors. When personal slavery entirely ceased, is not altogether known. In the ancient annals of the priory of Dunstable, is this extraordinary entry (1288): "We sold our slave, William Pyke, and received one mark from the buyer."^d Sir John, in the excess of his zeal for the honour of his country as compared with France, has given one very comical proof of its superiority: "The French," says he, "are so poor in heart, that they dare not commit robbery and murder; whereas the English are so courageous, that more are hanged in one year for those crimes than in France in seven."^e

F.—Comines, an unbiassed authority, was equally aware with Fortescue of the excellence of a legislative authority like the English parliament, which prevented

^a Livelihood.

^c Piers Plowman's Vision.

^e Monarchy.

^b Dress.

^d Annales de Dunstaple apud Hearne.

the sovereign from attacking the property of his subjects without their consent; and he observes in consequence, that of all the states in the world with which he was acquainted, England was the country in which the people were the least exposed to violence, and were treated with the most indulgence.*

A.—The distinction of a king *de jure* and a king *de facto* was well understood in this age. Edward the Fourth confirmed all the acts of his predecessors, as kings *en fait et nient en droit*,^b the first mention of this since well-known distinction. Sir John Fortescue stoutly defended the Lancastrian cause, and was taken prisoner at the battle of Tewkesbury, 1471. Edward the Fourth spared his life, the remainder of which he passed in retirement at his seat at Ebrington, in Gloucestershire, where he died at the age of ninety. He was appointed chancellor by Henry the Sixth, but he never took possession of the seals. This century was the era of the Court of Chancery exercising a full jurisdiction in equity, under Cardinal Beaufort,^c much to the discontent of the practisers of the common law.

F.—It is remarkable that Fitz-Stephens, in the reign of Henry the Second, in his very particular account of the office of an English chancellor, makes no mention of any thing relative to his judicial authority.

A.—Fortescue was not the only celebrated lawyer of the age. Sir Thomas Littleton, a judge of the Common Pleas, author of the *Treatise on English Tenures*, was his contemporary: this work still continues the basis on which the superstructure of the law of real property is supported. It would seem that the law was now become the favourite profession, there being no

* Livre 5, chap. 19.

^b Stat. 1 Edw. IV.

^c Walter Williams, *Jus Appellandi*, &c.

less than two thousand students in the inns of court, chiefly the sons of gentlemen.*

F.—Yet a famous statute, the 33d Henry the Sixth, restricted the number of attorneys in the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk to six for each, with an additional allowance of two for the city of Norwich. But it is stated by Sir Matthew Hale,^b that the practice of the common law had declined in excellence since the reign of Edward the Third.

A.—Whatever might be the state of the law, learning was in a lamentable condition, and had made a palpable retrogression, the fifteenth century being one of the darkest periods in the history of English literature: it boasted of no irrefragable or angelic doctors; even scholastic theology declined, nor was there one divine, philosopher, or physician, who did honour to his country; none of the learned Greek exiles from Constantinople visited Britain, or indeed any of their disciples, if we except Cornelius Vitellius,^c who read lectures on the Greek tongue at Oxford, but with a very transient effect.

F.—The deplorable sack of Constantinople (1453), taking place on the eve of the wars of the Roses, the nation had neither leisure to lament its fall, nor taste to perceive the inconceivable detriment which the loss of that city occasioned to letters. How everlastingly is it to be regretted that Europe did not reserve a portion of that strength, which she had senselessly wasted for centuries in the plains of Palestine, to defend this real bulwark of Christendom, whose preservation would have exhibited a living image of ancient manners, and continued to the present moment the vernacular use of

* Fortescue, *De Laud.* c. 49.

^b *Hist. Com. Law.*

^c Polydore Vergil.

that divine dialect, the euphony of which can now be so imperfectly understood.

A.—Though none of the Greek exiles at the fall of Constantinople found their way to England, yet we have seen that the universal patron of letters, Humfrey duke of Gloucester,^a had presented several Greek MSS. to the library at Oxford: thus furthering the future progress of learning, since the Greek language was little cultivated or understood at that university in the fifteenth century.

F.—Neither was science in a better state than learning: the old alchemical delusion still prevailed; and we have a licence from Henry the Sixth to certain individuals, in search of “the mother and queen of medicines, the inestimable glory, the quintessence—the elixir of life.”^b

A.—The practice of surgery must have been miserable. At the battle of Agincourt, there seems to have been only one surgeon, John Morstede, appointed by the government; he engaged indeed to find fifteen others, one third of whom however were to act as archers.^c With such sort of professional assistance, what must have been the situation of the wounded? But knowledge seems neither to have been esteemed nor honoured. It was thought enough for a nobleman's sons, even in a later age, “to wind their horn, and to carry their hawk fair, and to leave study to the children of mean people.”^d

P.—What subjects could then occupy the vast number of students at the universities and the inns of court?

A.—Fortescue relates, that it was the fashion for noblemen to place their children in these inns, even

^a Page 291.

^b Rymer, vol. 11.

^c Rymer, vol. 9.

^d Rich. Pace, *De Fructu Doctrinæ*.

though they designed not to have them particularly versed in the laws, as in them virtues were studied and vices exiled; he adds, that "they learned music and dancing, and such other accomplishments as were suitable to their quality, and were practised at court."^a

F.—A whimsical story is related, which may show in what degree of estimation the sacred person of a poet was at this time held. Two learned mendicants came to the castle of a certain nobleman, who understanding that they had a taste for poetry, commanded his servants to take them to a well, and to put one into the one bucket and the other into the other bucket, and let them down alternately into the water, and to continue the exercise till each of them had made a couple of verses on his bucket: which ceremony was performed to the great entertainment of the baron and his company.^b

A.—There is a complaint extant, made by the chancellor of Oxford, Dr. Gascoigne, in 1443, which may be partly applicable to other centuries than the fifteenth. "I knew," said this person, "a certain illiterate ideot, the son of a mad knight, who, for being the companion, or rather the fool, of the sons of a great family of the royal blood, was made archdeacon of Oxford before he was eighteen years of age, and soon after obtained two rich rectories and twelve prebends. I asked him one day what he thought of learning: 'As for learning,' said he, 'I despise it; I have better livings than any of your great doctors, and I believe as much as any of you.' What do you believe? 'I believe,' said he, 'that there are three Gods in one person; I believe all that God believes.'"^c

F.—The manners of the age seem to have little

^a De Laud. Ang.

^b Ant. à Wood, Hist. Oxon.

^c Ibid.

varied from the former period. Gentlemen breakfasted at seven and dined at ten, at which meal they continued three hours,* thus miserably wasting a most precious part of the day; they supped at four, and partook of a livery, or collation of spice and warm wine, at nine. The meals of tradesmen and yeomen, contrary to the present custom, were somewhat later than those of their superiors. At great tables, the master sat in state at the head of his oaken board, and his guests or family on long hard benches or forms. Happy the person whose rank or favour entitled him to be placed above the great family salt-cellar in the middle. The provisions seem to have been abundant, without much choice or selection.

A.—An extraordinary instance of profusion took place at the installation of George Neville, archbishop of York, brother of the king-making Earl of Warwick, in 1464: as it is the most extensive example of gluttony on a large scale in the English annals, it may be worth while to produce the very curious bill of fare:†

Quarters of wheat	300	Pigeons	4000
Tuns of ale	330	Rabbits	4000
Tuns of wine	104	Bittors	204
Tun of spiced wine	1	Ducks	4000
Fat oxen	80	Heronshaws	400
Wild bulls	6	Pheasants	200
Sheep	1004	Partridges	500
Hogs	300	Woodcocks	4000
Calves	300	Plovers	400
Geese	3000	Curlews	100
Capons	3000	Quails	100
Pigs	300	Egrets	1000
Peacocks	100	Rees	200
Cranes	200	Bucks, does, and roes . .	450
Kids	200	Hot venison pasties . . .	1506
Chickens	2000	Cold ditto	4000

* Northumberland Household Book.

† Godwin, *Præsulibus Angliæ*.

Dishes of jelly, parted . . . 1000	Pikes 300
Ditto, plain 4000	Breams 300
Cold custards 4000	Seals 8
Hot ditto 1000	Porpoises 4
Tarts 400	

P.—What were

Darty's ham pie and whole hog barbecued,

compared to these last two dainties?

A.—The Earl of Warwick was steward, the Earl of Bedford treasurer, and the Lord Howard constable, on this occasion. There were “one thousand servitors—sixty cooks—five hundred and fifteen kitcheners.” A very large part of the nobility, male and female, partook of this entertainment, most of the superior clergy, and many of the great gentry. “Those persons who were present,” says Fuller,^a in his quaint way, “had strong stomachs to devour so much meat at one time, and others absent stronger faith to believe it. How long the feast lasted is uncertain; but by the pork, doves, and woodcocks, it must have been in the winter season. No turkeys are mentioned, as at this time they were unknown in Europe.”

P.—It could not be a poor or exhausted country which could supply such a repast.

A.—The country seems rather to have been exhausted of men than of provisions; what with the French wars first, and then the succeeding civil wars, such multitudes had perished, that hands were wanting to carry on the operations of husbandry. Loud complaints were made of the high price of labour and the scarcity of husbandmen;^b and this scarcity is supposed to have caused the practice of enclosing^c or changing arable lands, particularly the demesnes of the great

^a Church Hist.

^b Stat. 7 Hen. IV.; 2 Hen. V.; 4 Hen. V.; 2 Hen. VI.; 23 Hen. VI.

^c Joan. Rossi, Hist. Angl.

lords about their castles, into pasture; a practice so loudly complained of, that at length, perhaps very needlessly, parliament interfered.*

F.—The first corn-law, prohibiting the importation of grain, was passed 3d Edward the Fourth, 1463. It complains that occupiers in husbandry were grievously endamaged by the importation of corn, when at a low price; it therefore forbids that practice when wheat was not lower than six shillings and eightpence, rye four shillings, and barley three shillings the quarter.

A.—It is remarkable that a statute was passed seventy years earlier, 17th Richard the Second, confirmed by the statute 15th Henry the Sixth, permitting the exportation of corn on paying the customary duties, when wheat bore the same price (six shillings and eightpence) the quarter. From the usual prejudices afloat on the subject, we should naturally expect to have seen this order of things reversed.

P.—Did these prices bear the same proportion to their relative modern value, as those in the time of the scarcity in the reign of Edward the Second?

A.—The relative proportion between the weight of silver and the value of commodities seems to have undergone little or no alteration; but if we attend to the gradual deterioration of the coin, as expressed in the following table,^b we shall be better able to appreciate the result:

From the Conquest to Edward III. a pound Tower				<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
weight of silver was coined into				20	0
In the 20th year of Edward III. —				22	6
— 27th	—	Edward III.	—	25	0
— 9th	—	Henry V.	—	30	0
— 1st	—	Henry VI.	—	37	6
— 4th	—	Henry VI.	—	30	0
— 39th	—	Henry VI.	—	37	6

* Stat. 4 Hen. 7.

^b Fleetwood

The standard of the metal remained unchanged: 11 oz. 2 *dwt.*s. of fine silver, with 18 *dwt.*s. of alloy. And thus the shilling continued till the reign of Henry the Eighth: what further reduction it then received, both in size and purity, enters not into our present detail. If we compare the weight of six shillings and eightpence, in the reign of Edward the Fourth, it will be found equivalent to ten shillings and eightpence modern, allowing the present pound to contain sixty shillings; this sum, if we multiply by ten, according to the scale allotted in the reign of Edward the Second,^a will give the value of the quarter of wheat at five pounds six shillings and eightpence; a higher protecting price than what is now afforded by the corn laws. Notwithstanding the discouragement of the civil wars, the woollen manufacture continued to increase all over the kingdom. Commerce was however much harassed by injudicious restrictions and monopolies; a great part of the foreign trade being in the hands of various privileged companies, such as the German Merchants of the Steelyard, the Merchants of the Staple, the Merchant Adventurers, and the Brotherhood of St. Thomas à Becket for the Exportation of Woollen Cloth.^b All foreign merchants were compelled to lay out the money which they received for goods imported, in English merchandize to be exported,^c in order to prevent their taking any silver out of the kingdom.

F.—The prohibitory system was much encouraged by the act 2nd Richard the Third, which forbids the importation of a vast variety of articles manufactured in England by the different trades of girdlers, point-makers, pinners, pursers, glovers, joiners, painters, card-makers,

^a Page 66.

^b Anderson, *Hist. of Commerce*.

^c 4 Hen. IV.; 5 Hen. VIII.

wiremongers, weavers, horners, bottle-makers, and coppersmiths.

P.—This is an enumeration of commodities which we are not apt to consider as having been manufactured here at so early a period.

A.—The emporium of European commerce at this era was Bruges, whither all sorts of merchandize were collected and distributed. In a curious poetical work, entitled “The Libel of English Policie, exhorting all England to keep the Sea, and namely, the Narrow Sea,”^a written about the year 1432, we are told that Spain, Flanders, Portugal, Bretagne, Scotland, Easterlings, Prussia, and Germany, sent their commodities to Bruges; and consequently they do not appear to have traded directly with England. The English sent few other manufactured articles besides their woollen cloths to this universal mart, but they bought in return more goods than all the other nations of Europe. As we were at war with France, the author makes no mention of our dealings with that country; but he is somewhat indignant at the nature of the commodities which we imported direct from Italy:

The great galleys of Venice and Florence
Be well laden with things of complacence:
Apes and japes, and marmosets tailed,
Niftes and trifles that little have availed.

F.—This author introduces the praise of Whittington with much warmth, as the great merchant of his day:

..... Now think I on the son
Of marchandy, Richard of Whittingdon,
That load sterre and chief chosen flowere.

A.—The immediate object of the poem was to impress upon England the wisdom of remaining mistress

^a Hakluyt, Voyages, vol. 1.

of the narrow sea between Dover and Calais; which two places, he says, the Emperor Sigismond, told Henry the Fifth to preserve as his two eyes; since, as all the merchandize southwards must pass through this straight to Bruges, England had the power of compelling Europe to court her friendship.

F.—Ireland is represented in this work as a country and soil of unequalled fertility. It will surprise us to learn that even at this early period she had established a linen manufactory:

I cast to speak of Irelande but a little;
Commodities of it I will entitle:
Hides and fish, salmon, hake, herringe,
Irish wool, and linen cloth faldinge.

P.—During a long period we have heard little or nothing of that country: what was its history?

A.—She had properly speaking no history. What between the turbulence and tyranny of the barons of English descent, the factions of the native chiefs, and the irreclaimable barbarism of the inhabitants, the superiority of England was little regarded; consequently the confused and unvarying scenes of insurrection and slaughter, of oppression and resistance, deserve neither record nor remembrance.

F.—In enumerating exports and imports, we must not pass over one curious article, that of pilgrims: it appears that not less than two thousand four hundred and thirty-three of these devotees took out a licence to visit the shrine of St. James of Compostella, in the year 1434;* but as a happy counterpoise, a still greater importation of the same commodity, proceeding to the tomb of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, turned the balance of trade in our favour.

* Rymer, vol. 10.

A.—Superstition was much more the fashion of the day than letters: the scarcity of books must have been severely felt by the few lovers of literature; even a great prince like Henry the Fifth, who had a taste for reading, was obliged to borrow several volumes, which were claimed by the owners after his death, by a petition to the council.^a

F.—The Latin tongue had become so degenerated, that when an author could not readily find a Latin word which suited his purpose, he coined one from the English, as *arrivavit*, he arrived, in William of Wyrcester; and *contrivissent*, they had contrived, by John Rous the antiquary.

P.—But the English language, we may suppose, continued to make some progress.

A.—A century had caused considerable improvement. The Letters of the Paston Family, the proems to the various books of Caxton, and Sir John Fortescue's treatise on Monarchy, if not very agreeable reading, are sufficiently intelligible, as an epistle from Dame Agnes Paston to her husband, Sir William Paston, knight, and a judge of the Common Pleas, will evince. It gives an account of the first introduction of a young lady to the family as the intended spouse of her son. Its date is about the year 1440:

“To my worshepful housbond, W. Paston, be this
letter takyn.

“Dere Housbond, I recomaunde me to yow, &c. blessyd be God. I sende yow gode tydynggs of ye comyng and ye brynggyn hoom of ye Gentylwomman yat ye wetyn^b of fro. Redham yis same night acordyng to poyntment, yat ye made yer^c for yowrself. And as

^a vol. 10.

^b Know.

^c There.

for ye furste aqueyntaunce betwen John Paston and ye seyde Gentylwomman, she made hym Gentil chere in Gentil wyse, and seyde he was verrayly your son. And so I hope yer shall nede no gret tretè betwyxe hym.^a

“Ye parson of Stocton toold me yif ye wolde byin her a Gounne, here moder wolde yeve^b therto a godely furre. Ye gounne nedyth for to be had, and of colour it wolde be a godely blew, or erlys^c a bryghte sangueyn.

“I prey yow do byen for me 2 pypys^d of gold. Your stewes^e do weel. The holy Trinitè have you in governaunce. Wretyn at Paston in haste, ye Wednesday next after ‘Deus qui errantibus;’^f for defeaute of a good secretaire, &c.

“Yowres, AGN. PASTON.”^g

A.—The difference of dialect was so great, that persons of one county did not understand those of another. Caxton says, that the language now used (1490,) varied from that which was spoken when he was born; and he asserts that, in his translations, some blamed him for too much adhering to the ancient style, whilst others thought that he too much favoured the modern. “So that between plain, rude, and curious,” says the honest printer, “I stand abashed.”^h

F.—This author gives a ludicrous proof of the diversity of dialects, in the distress of one master Sheffield, a mercer of London, who being obliged, on his passage to Zealand, to land near the Foreland in Kent, and asking for some refreshment, particularly for eggs,

^a Them.

^b Give.

^c Else.

^d Gold thread for embroidery.

^e Ponds for fish.

^f The beginning of the collect on the third Sunday after Easter.

^g Letters of the Paston Family, edited by Sir John Fenn, vol. 1.

^h Proem to the Boke of Encydos.

the hostess told him that she spoke no French. Sheffield conscious that he knew no other language than his own, grew angry, but continued unintelligible, till another passenger happening to say that he would have eyren, a word of Teutonic origin, which the good woman understood, the mercer's hunger was presently relieved.*

A.—The use of the French language had extremely declined in the higher classes. In the negotiation between the dauphin and Henry the Fifth, it was agreed that two copies of every instrument should be made, one in Latin and one in French;† Henry giving the extraordinary reason, that his ambassadors did not speak or understand the latter tongue.‡ And Caxton states, that the motives which induced him to translate so many books from French into English, were, because “most quantity of the people understand no French here.”§

F.—This author complains of the ill effect of the neglect of learning upon the youth of London in these terms: “Fairer, ne wiser, ne bet bespoken children, ben no where than there ben in London; but at their full ripening there is no kernel, no good corn founden, but chaff for the most part.” And he adds, “that out of ten scarcely two thrive.”¶

P.—Was the gradual alteration and improvement of the English tongue much assisted by the success of the poetical writers of the age?

A.—The few poets who flourished in the fifteenth century, commonly possessed facility of language, which was their chief, if not their only merit. The first

* Proem to the Booke of Enneydon.

† Monstrelet.

‡ Proem to Catho Magna.

§ Rymer, vol. 3.

¶ Proem to Charles the Great.

in point of time was Thomas Occleve, 1420: his pieces chiefly remained in MS. till a selection from them was published in 1796. Mr. Warton characterizes this poet as of cold and feeble genius, affording no gratification in his works for those who seek for invention or fancy.

F.—Yet the story of “Jonathas and his Legacy of Three Jewels,” introduced into Browne’s “Shepherd’s Pipe,” is by no means destitute of invention, and is indeed a very readable production. There is also an epigram satirizing the dress of the times, not without some point and pleasantry:

Now hath this land little need of brooms,
To sweep away the filth out of the streets:
In side-sleeves of pennyless groomes
Will it uplicke, be it dry or wete.

A.—The name of John Lydgate, the monk of Bury, is better known than that of Occleve; and though his works experience at present equal neglect, yet they were for a long period much praised, though I cannot imagine such tedious prolixity could ever be much read. His principal poem is the “History and Destruction of Troy,” a translation in verse from the prose history of Guido de Colonna, written two centuries before, and founded not so much on Homer or Virgil, as on the spurious narratives of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis. It exhibits a curious adaptation of classical lore to the manners of chivalry; but though the poem is bustling and full of events, yet the insupportable length of twenty-eight thousand verses utterly precludes perusal. Lydgate has obtained a reputation for perspicuity of language far beyond his deserts, this work having been modernized and republished in 1614, under the title of “The Life and Death of Hector,” and which has been often quoted as the original.

F.—The late Mr. Ritson was quite furious against poor Lydgate, whom he describes as a most prolix and voluminous poetaster, a prosaic and drivelling monk, whose cart-loads of rubbish are equally stupid and fatiguing; and to say the truth, the very titles of his pieces, both printed and in MS. as exhibited by that indefatigable collector, are truly terrific.

A.—Few persons consequently are disposed to dispute the justice of the critique upon the strength of their own experience; yet one piece of Lydgate's is amusing enough, "The London Lyckpenny," in which the author supposes himself to have come to town in search of legal redress for some wrong, and in which we are presented with a perfect picture of the metropolis in the reign of Henry the Sixth. Though the poem is somewhat long, I will not spoil it by abridging.

THE LONDON LYCKPENNY.

To Londone once my steppes I bent,
Where truth in no wyse should be faynt;
To Westminster wares I forthwith went,
To a man of law to make complaynt;
I said, for Marie's love (that holy seynt),
Pity the poore, that wold proceede;
But for lacke of mony I cold not spede.

And as I thruste the presse amonge,
By froward chaunce my hoode was gone;
Yet for all that I staid not longe,
Till at the King's Benche I was en.
Before the judge I kneeled anone,
And pray'd him for Godde's sake to take hede;
But for lacke of mony I might not spede.

Beneth them set clerkes a gret rout,
Which fast did wryte by one assent;
There stood up one and cried about
Rycharde, Robert, and John of Kent;
I wyst not well what this man ment;
He cryed out thryse, there in dede;
But he that lackt mony might not spede.

Unto the Common Pleas I yode thoo,
 Where set one wyth a sylken hooode;
 I did him reverence (for I ought to so),
 I told my case there, as well as I coude,
 Howe my goodes were defrarded me by falshood;
 I gat not a move of his mouth for my mede,
 And for lacke of mony I might not spede.

Unto the Rolles I gat me from thence,
 Before the clarkes of the Chauncerye,
 Where many I found earnyng of pense,
 But none at all once regarded me,
 I gave them my playnt upon my kneec:
 They lyked it well when they had it read,
 But lackyng of mony I might not spede.

In Westminster Halle, I founde out owne,
 Which went in a longe gown of saye;
 I crowched, I kneeled before hym anon,
 For Marye's love of help, I hym praye.
 I wot not what thou meanest, gan he saye,
 To get me thence he did me bede;
 For lacke of mony I could not spede.

Within the halle, neyther ryche nor yet poor
 Would do for me oughte, altho I shoulde dye;
 Which seeing, I gat me oute of the doore,
 Where Flemynge began on me for to crye,
 Master, what will you copen^a or by?
 Fine felte hattes, or spectacles to rede,
 Lay down your sylver and here you may spede.

Then to Westmynster gate I presently went,
 When the soun it was at hygh pryme;
 Cokes to me they tooke goode entent,
 And proffered me bread, with ale and wyne,
 Rybbes of befe, both fat and ful fyne;
 A fayre cloth they gan for to sprede,
 But wanting mony I might not be spede.

Then unto London I dyde me hye;
 Of all the land it beareth the pryse.
 Hot pescode one began to crye;
 Strawberry ripe, and cherries in the ryse;^b
 One bad me draw nere, and buy some spyce;
 Pepper and saffrone, they gan me bede,
 But for lacke of money I myghte not spede.

^a Barter.

^b On the twig.

Then to the Chepe, I gan me drawne,
 Where much people I saw for to stande :
 One offred me velvet, sylke, and lawne ;
 Another he takes me by the hande,
 Here is Paris thred, the fynest in the lande.
 I never was used to such thynges in dede,
 And wantyng mony I myght not spede.

Then went I forth by London stone,
 Throughout all Canwicke streete .
 Drapers much cloth me offred anone ;
 Then comes me one cryed hot sheepes fete,
 One cryed mackerell, pesen grene, an other gan greeke ;
 One bad me by a hooде to cover my heade,
 But for want of mony I myght not spede.

Then I hyed me unto Eastchepe ;
 One cryes rybbes of befe, and many a pye ;
 Pewter pottes, they scattered on a hepe ;
 There was harpe, pype, and mynstrelsye ;
 Yea by cock, nay by cock, some gan crye ;
 Some sange of Jenken and Julyan for their mede,
 But for lacke of mony I might not spede.

Then into Cornhill anon I yode,^a
 Where was much stolen gere, amonge
 I saw where honge myne owne hooде,
 That I had lost amonge the thronge :
 To buy my own hooде I thoughte it wronge ;
 I knew it well as I did my crede,
 But for lacke of mony I could not spede.

The taverner tooke me by the sleve,
 Syr, saith he, wyll you owr wyne assay ?
 I answered, that can not much me greve,
 A peny can do no more than yt maye ;
 I dranke a pynte, and for yt dyd paye ;
 Yet sore a-hungred from thence I yede,
 And wanting mony I could not spede.

Then hyed I me to Belyngagate,
 And one cryed Hoo !—go we hence ;
 I prayed a barge man for God's sake,
 That he wold spare me my expence.
 " Thou scapest not here," quoth he, " under twopence."
 I list not yet bestowe my almes dede ;
 Thus lackyng mony I could not spede.

^a Went.

Then I conveyed me into Kent,
 For of the law wold I meddle no more,
 Because no man to me tooke entent,
 I dyght me to do as I did before.
 Now Jesus that in Bethlehem was born,
 Save London and send trew lawyers there mede,
 For whoso wants mony with them shall not spede.

A.—This piece is from the Harleian MSS. No. 367; and was I believe first printed in the third volume of Strutt's "View of Manners," &c.

P.—The general worthlessness of English poetry, before the age of Elizabeth, always excepting the "Canterbury Tales" of Chaucer, is somewhat surprising; whilst our neighbours the Scots possessed poets in Barbour and Blind Harry, whose works took so strong a hold of the national feeling as to continue popular to the present hour.

A.—The subject of these writers, the deliverance of their country, tends much to explain the secret of their success. England had not been exposed to the gripe of a foreign oppressor, and consequently none of our patriots, since the days of William the Conqueror, stand precisely in the same interesting relation as Wallace and Bruce.

F.—Our national hero seems to have been Robin Hood: many of the numerous ballads in his commendation were the production of the fifteenth century; but their authors are unknown.

A.—Though the names of Occleve and Lydgate are alone familiar to our ears as poets in this era, yet we are not to suppose that it was without its *stellæ minores*, who, as rhymers or translators, twinkled through their little day, or rather night, in considerable numbers, unnoticed by posterity. Of this class is the unknown author of "The Not Browne Maide," though placed by

Mr. Warton as somewhat later. This old ballad has been rescued from oblivion by the modernization of Prior, whose "Henry and Emma," in my eyes however, has not the merit of its original.

F.—The fifteenth century would not be destitute of poetical merit, could the works of the *gode* priests Rowlie be substantiated as genuine, and who is represented as flourishing about the year 1470. With our present lights the question seems so entirely decided, that we wonder how two opinions could ever have existed on the subject.

A.—The internal evidence against the authenticity of the poems attributed to Rowley is incontrovertible. Such a style is too ancient for the assumed date of the composition; the unreasonable accumulation of uncouth and obsolete words on the one side betraying as much a fabrication, as the continued harmony of the measure on the other. Compare the verse which begins the "Tragycal Enterlude of Ælla," with any known production of Occleve or Lydgate, or even with "The Not Browne Maide;" and we shall be readily convinced of its total dissimilarity to any existing poetry of the fifteenth century:

Before yonne roddie sonne has droove his wayne
 Throwe halfe hys joornie, dyghte yn gites of goulde,
 Mee hapless mee hee wylle a wretche behoulde
 Mieselfe and al that's myne, bound ynne myschaunces chayne.

F.—The industry which could have produced these imposing poems must indeed have been stupendous; but I cannot help thinking that the genius of their unfortunate author has been somewhat overrated. Chatterton's acknowledged works scarcely rise above the level of the common magazine poetry of their day: the merit of the poems attributed to Rowley is confessedly superior, as they possess sentiment, pathos, and great

power of description; but they owe much of their attraction to the curiosity excited by their history, and are rarely perused for the mere poetical pleasure which they afford; and judging from the usual examples of precocious genius, we may reasonably question whether the author would have become, as one of his admirers expresses it, "the greatest poet of any age or country."

A.—If fame were Chatterton's object, his deceptions were certainly the adequate means of obtaining it; for I agree in the opinion, that the compositions of Rowley, miraculous as the fabrication of a boy of seventeen, would have attracted but small notice, if presented to the world divested of their antique phraseology.

F.—In these cases the hackneyed adage, *qui vult decipi decipiatur*, is singularly applicable; and we may charitably suppose, that had not Chatterton's deplorable catastrophe so soon taken place, it might be his intention to disclose the secret when his supposed purpose was secured, as we have seen in the more recent case of the Shakspeare forgeries: and there are minds surely not particularly depraved, who could sympathise with the author in the chuckling gratification of seeing a whole synod of antiquarian wisdom and gravity so completely deluded.

A.—One of the principal arguments used in detecting the imposition, is the nature of the poem from which we have made our quotation, a regular tragedy in the Grecian style, a mode of composition utterly unknown in the English tongue during the fifteenth century, but which Mr. Mason's two tragedies of "Caractacus" and "Elfrida" had rendered extremely popular, a few years before the works of Rowley appeared.

P.—In what form then did the drama exist at this period in England?

A.—The first particular account of any spectacle partaking of a dramatic nature, is to be found in Matthew Paris, who relates in his *Lives of the Abbots of St. Albans*, that a miracle play, on the subject of St. Catharine, was acted by the novices of Dunstable Abbey, in 1110. That such performances were known in the reign of Henry the Second, we have the testimony of Fitzstephens, who, in his description of London, mentions the exhibition of religious plays, on the subject of the miracles, or the sufferings of the martyrs, as one of the usual diversions of that city.

P.—By what actors and in what theatres were these performances exhibited?

A.—On certain festivals, the mysteries were performed in temporary structures, or in the churches, more commonly the latter; and as they were introduced by the ecclesiastics, so the clergy continued to be the chief performers. The choir-boys also, in many cathedrals, were instructed in the mimetic art; ^a those of St. Paul's remained actors till after the age of Shakspeare.

F.—It was in these societies that the ceremony of the Boy Bishop was celebrated: the children performed mass, preached, and went through all the religious forms pertaining to such an occasion. In Salisbury cathedral is a monument to the memory of one of these juvenile prelates, who happened to die in his pontificate.

A.—Even the grave Dean Colet ordained regulations for “a chylde bishop,” in his statutes establishing St. Paul's School; and to this day the “Montem” at Eton may be considered as a vestige of an ancient procession connected with some similar ceremony.^b

^a Warton, vol. 2.

^b Ibid.

F.—These buffooneries were much akin to the *Fête des Foux* and the *Fête d'Asne*, so celebrated on the continent; and the same spirit too accompanied the miracle plays, the devil being commonly introduced as a principal performer, with horns, a very wide mouth, staring eyes, a large nose, cloven feet, and a tail, constantly attended by the vice, a sort of jack-pudding, whose chief employment was to belabour the common enemy with a wooden dagger, to make him roar for the entertainment of the audience:

In a trice,
Like to the old vice,
Who with dagger of lath,
In his rage and his wrath,
Cries Ah ha! to the devil.^a

P.—Our forefathers seem to have had no idea of burlesque, for nothing to a modern understanding can appear so profane as such representations.

A.—These performances, both in France and England, were set off by machinery. The old drawings of hell-mouth, in the shape of an enormous pair of jaws, with shark-like teeth, prefixed as a frontispiece in some old books of divinity, for the purpose of alarming the consciences of incorrigible sinners, were borrowed from the instructive image exhibited in the miracle plays. This terrifying machine was constructed with boards, and covered with leather; and into its awful gulph, vomiting forth flames, the malefactors of the drama were driven by the fiends. Whatever dialogue was introduced was anciently in Latin. The earliest performance that we meet with in the English tongue being the Chester Whitsun Plays, written by Ralph Higden, and exhibited in 1328,^b at the expense of the different trades of that city: they remain in MS. in the British Museum,^c

^a Twelfth Night, act 4. ^b Warton, vol. 2. ^c MSS. Harleian, 2013.

with the language somewhat modernized. The subjects are taken from both the Old and New Testament, and three days were employed in their representation. In the "Creation," our first parents were introduced in their primeval suit, without any discomposure either to themselves or the audience; and the events of the first two chapters of Genesis were represented, not without considerable interest: however we may smile, these performances, when the people could not read their bible, had their use, by teaching the principal events of the scriptures; and they softened the ferocity of the age, by diverting public attention from spectacles like the tilts and tournaments, which encouraged slaughter and cruelty.

F.—Yet the constant endeavour to introduce some gross buffoonery, we might suppose, would much destroy the benefit of the example. In the mystery of the "Deluge," Noah's wife is drawn with much spirit as a refractory shrew, unwilling to leave her gossips and her malmsey, and who salutes her husband, when compelled to enter the ark, with a sound box on the ear. How far the miracle plays tended to edification, we may judge, from their being a favourite resort with ladies of such a disposition as Chaucer's Wife of Bath:

To see, and eke for to be seie,
Therefore made I my visitations
To vigilies and to processions,
To prechings eke, and to thise pilgrimages,
To plays of miracles and mariages.

A.—There is also a collection of miracle plays in the British Museum,* with the name of "Dramata Sacra," composed by the Mendicant Friars of Coventry. One or more of these pieces was accustomed to be acted by them in that city on a temporary and moveable

* Cotton MSS. Vesp. D. 8.

theatre, on Corpus Christi day, before immense multitudes. Forty heads or arguments of these compositions, and one drama entire, are printed in Stevens's *Monascon*.^a Farther information may also be obtained from Mr. Sharp's recent publication on the subject. These "Sacred Dramas" are scarcely so ancient as the Chester Whitsun Plays, but, like them, they are equally drawn both from the Old and New Testament.

F.—The most remarkable exhibition of the miracle plays took place in the year 1409, at Clerkenwell, by the parish clerks, who might at that time be considered as a religious fraternity, many of them being in orders. "The Creation of the World," probably one of the Chester or Coventry plays, was represented by them for eight days together, and the performance was attended by most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom.^b

A.—At length however the drama, such as it was, assumed a form somewhat different. In the pompous pageants and processions which took place on public occasions, it was customary to introduce various allegorical personages, such as Victory, Fortune, Strength, and Wisdom; nor indeed were the mysteries without their spiritual personifications, of Sin, Death, Hope, and Faith. This practice gave the idea of forming a drama consisting entirely of such metaphysical abstractions, and these were called moralities: they are not of an earlier date than Edward the Fourth, nor did they reach any great popularity till the age of Henry the Eighth and his son, when they obtained their meridian. These pieces, though they afforded materials for poetry, or even philosophy, are decidedly less dramatic than the old mysteries, nor did they continue in favour so long.

F.—During the struggles of the reformation, the

^a Vol. 1, p. 138.

^b Stow, *Annals*.

miracle plays were favoured by the catholics, who even gave indulgencies to those who attended them, and were opposed by the protestants; consequently, though often forbidden, they as often revived. The last instance of a performance of this nature, was a mystery on the subject of Christ's passion, played at Ely House, the then residence of Gondomar, the Spanish ambassador, in the reign of James the First; at which, says Prynne,* with some spleen, there were thousands present.

A.—Whether our English drama elaborated itself out of the rude beginnings of the mysteries and moralities, or whether, as it is more probable, it was suggested by the performance of the plays of Plautus and Terence at the universities, it is unnecessary here to discuss, it being an event subsequent to the period of our enquiries.

F.—One of the greatest literary curiosities of the barren fifteenth century, is the work of Dame Juliana Barnes, or Berners, prioress of the nunnery of Sope-well, the first known English female writer: it consists of three tracts on hawking, hunting, and heraldry: the second of these pieces is in verse. They are said to have been first printed at St. Albans, whence they have obtained the title of the "Book of St. Albans." The only original copy in a perfect state now extant, it is believed, of this edition, was sold at the Roxburghe sale; but there are several copies of the date of 1496, printed by Wynkyn de Worde.

P.—These are strange subjects to exercise the pen of a female head of a religious house: we might rather have expected a manual of devotion, or directions for distilling strong waters.

F.—To account for her choice of the subject, we

* *Histriomastix*, p. 117.

are to recollect, that the abbeſs poſſeſſed an extenſive manerial jurisdiction. Mr. Warton ſuſpects the whole to be a tranſlation from the French, and the tract on heraldry to be written by another hand. The abſurdity of the introduction to this piece is unſurpaſſable. The author thus explains the origin of gentility and the difference between churles and gentlemen: “There was never gentleman nor churl ordained, but had father and mother: Adam and Eve had neither father nor mother, and therefore in their ſons iſſued out both gentleman and churl. By Seth, Abel, and Cain, was the royal blood divided from the rude and barbarous. A brother to murder his brother contrary to law, what could be more ungentlemanly and vile; in that therefore Cain and all his offſpring became churles, both by the curſe of God and of his own father.”—“And in the three ſons of Noah, after the world’s inundation, were both gentleneſs and vileneſs diſcerned. Japhet, the youngeſt, gentlemanlike, reproved his brother, which was to him reputed a virtue; and Noah ſaid, on thee will I rain my bleſſing, and make thee a gentleman. And ſo from the offſpring of gentlemanly Japhet came Abraham, Moſes, Aaron, and the prophets, and alſo the king of the right line of Mary, of whom that only abſolute gentleman, Jeſus, was born, perfite God, and perfite man, according to his manhoode, king of the land of Juda and the Jews, and gentleman by his mother Mary, princeſs of coat armour.”

A.—Our anceſtors, in the ſimplicity of their hearts, ſeem never to have ſuſpected how nearly this familiar admixture of ſcripture alluſion with common ſubjects, approached to profaneſs.

P.—Was the age as deficient in hiſtorical as in other ſpecies of literary merit?

A.—A ſort of connecting link between the poets

and the historians, is the Chronicle of England from the arrival of Brute to the fourteenth year of the reign of Edward the Fourth, by John Hardyng, one of the dullest metrical works of this or any other age. Its author was a military man, born in 1378, and admitted into the family of Henry Hotspur. The chronicle itself is beneath all criticism, and scarcely equals in merit that of Robert of Gloucester, of the age of Edward the First. It was printed and continued in prose by Graf-ton, to the year 1543: both annalists are equally dry and meagre. The events which occurred in Hardyng's own time are supposed to be recorded with fidelity.

F.—The cause of the paucity of historical information, during the larger part of the fifteenth century, has been already explained.* No period since the Conquest is so slightly illustrated by records and authentic documents as these turbulent and distracted years. Caxton states, that his reason for continuing Higden's Polychronicon was, "because men's wits in this time be oblivious and lightly forgotten many things dygne to be put in memory; and also there cannot be found in these days but few that write in their registers such things as daily happen and fall."

A.—The History of England, by Thomas Walsingham, a monk in the abbey of St. Albans, begins at the last year of Henry the Third, and concludes with the splendid funeral of Henry the Fifth, and the appointment of Humfrey duke of Glocester to the regency. This author takes up the story where Matthew Paris ends, and he might be deemed a worthy continuator, were his style equal to his matter, which, notwithstanding its being deformed by many stories of visions, miracles, and portents, the vice of the age, yet from its full, circumstantial, and satisfactory information, is

truly valuable. Another work of Walsingham's has the whimsical title of "*Ypodigma Neustriæ*," the ancient name of Normandy: it is a history of that province, interspersed with the affairs of England, from the beginning of the tenth century to 1418. This the author published, as he says, to guard Henry the Fifth from trusting to French promises, being tormented with fears lest they should deceive him.

F.—An additional proof of the justice of Comines' remark on the unskilfulness of English negotiators.*

A.—Another writer, Thomas Otterbourne, a Franciscan friar, gave a history of England from the landing of Brutus to the year 1420: an indifferent composition, but affording some useful information relative to his own times. Thomas of Elmham, prior of Linton, wrote a copious history of the life and reign of Henry the Fifth, in a very inflated style; but as he had his information from persons of rank, who were eye-witnesses of the events, his work is estimable. This history was abridged by an Italian, who assumed the name of Titus Livius, a professed admirer, but an unsuccessful imitator, of his great prototype. John Whethamstede, abbot of St. Albans, wrote a chronicle from 1441 to 1461: it contains many original papers; but the most remarkable circumstance pertaining to this person was his extreme longevity; he died in 1464, above one hundred years of age. William of Wyrcester, sometimes called Botoner, from the name of his mother, was born at Bristol, and wrote *Annals of England*, from 1324 to 1490, in a most uncouth style; but though meagre and uninteresting, they contain several things not to be found elsewhere. It is supposed that the latter part of the work was furnished by his son.

F.—In drawing near the close of the century, we

* Page 343.

must not forget the antiquary, John Rous of Warwick, who wrote a history of the kings of England: he begins at the creation of the world, and ends with the marriage of Henry the Seventh. His language is barbarous, his credulity childish, but he accidentally mentions many curious particulars concerning the state of England and the manners of its inhabitants during his own times. He died at an advanced age in 1491.

A.—A writer, who may be said to close the series of ancient English historians who composed in Latin, is the unknown continuator of the History of Croyland Abbey, began by Ingulph. This author was a doctor of canon law, and a member of the council under Edward the Fourth: he declares that he has written without falsehood, hatred, or favour, and in relating the events with which he was contemporary, he may be considered as perfectly authentic: though not possessing the strong painting and eloquence of Sir Thomas More, yet his account of the transactions in the reigns of Edward the Fifth and Richard the Third, being less rhetorical, is generally to be preferred.

F.—In reviewing the list of the ancient English historians, we cannot but observe that, with two or three exceptions, they were all of the monastic profession; and though it be confessed that, as elegant or classical compositions, none of their works have any chance to be read, except perhaps those of William of Malmesbury and Matthew Paris, for the entertainment which they afford; yet we may justly ask what would be our knowledge of English history without the information of these much decried monkish authorities? and though from various causes the utility of monasteries has been superseded, it would be ungrateful to forget the debt which we owe to their inhabitants, as

the originators and preservers of so great a national treasure.

P.—Have these works been collected and published in any uniform edition, under the auspices of government or of the universities?

A.—It would have been mortifying to answer the question, had not a resolution of the House of Commons been passed about three years since,* recommending such a project to the care of government, which, I am happy to learn, is commenced under the most favourable auspices.

F.—There is an excellent collection, which Gibbon said long ago might provoke our emulation, entitled "*Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*," in large folio. This work was begun by Dom. Martin Bouquet, a learned Benedictine, and the first volume appeared in 1738. The publication has since proceeded at various intervals; it was not discontinued by the French government under Buonaparte, two volumes having been printed with the Imperial sanction. The eighteenth volume is of so recent a date as 1822, and yet reaches only to the events of the thirteenth century. This "*Recueil*" appertains almost as much to English as to French history, and contains large extracts from most of our ancient historians. It is gratifying to hear the French editors acknowledge that the English historians are not only more in number, but better instructed than their own of what passed in France.

P.—However thankful for anticipated benefits, yet if the English collection proceeds at the same leisurely pace, the existing generation can scarcely expect to derive much advantage from the undertaking. In the mean time we may inquire by what editions the diligent student can at present gratify his curiosity?

* Dibdin, *Library Companion*, p. 141.

A.—We cannot arrange the historians according to the date of their birth, as they have been chiefly published in collections, embracing writers of widely differing periods, according to the caprice of the editors. The earliest *Fasciculus* was published in London, 1574, in folio, under the patronage of Archbishop Parker. It is a handsome book, not of common occurrence, and contains

Historia Brevis, Thomæ Walsingham, ab. Ed. I. ad Hen. V. Printed by Binneman.

Ypodigma Neustriæ, per Thomam de Walsingham, ab irruptione Normannorum, ad ann. 6. regni Hen. V.

Ælfredi Regis, res gestæ. This is the life of Alfred by Asser, in Latin, but with Anglo-Saxon letters.

These two latter works were printed by John Day.

The next collection was edited and printed by Commelin, at Heidelberg, in folio, 1587. Another title-page appears sometimes to this edition, dated Lyons. The work is entitled

RERUM BRITANNICARUM, scriptores vetustiores ac precipui.

Galfredi Monumetensis. Arturi de origine et gestis Regum Britannicæ, lib. XII.

Pontici Virunnii, lib. VI.

Gildæ, Epistola.

Bedæ, *Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ*, lib. v. *continuatio ejusdem historiæ*, incerto auctore, lib. III.

Gulielmus Neubricensis de rebus Anglicis, lib. v.

Johannis Froissardi *Historiarum Epitome*.

F.—We cannot very highly commend the judgment of an editor who could place in the same scale of

historical evidence the works of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Froissart; the work of Ponticus Virunnus, of whose name few persons have ever heard, is merely an abridgment of Geoffrey's History.

A.—In a few years followed Sir Henry Savile's collection, first published in London, 1596, and afterwards at Francfort, 1601, folio :

RERUM ANGLICARUM, scriptores post Bedam precipui.

Willielmi Malmesburiensis, de gestis Regum Anglorum, lib. v.

- - - - - Historiæ Novellæ, lib. II.

- - - - - de gestis Pontificum Anglorum, lib. IV.

Henrici Huntindoniensis, Historiarum, lib. VIII.

Rogeri Hovedeni, Annalium pars prior et posterior.

Æthelwerdi, Chronicorum, lib. IV.

Ingulphi Abbatis Croylandensis, Historiarum, lib. II.

These authors are truly valuable, and the example induced Camden to publish at Francfort, in 1603, folio,

ANGLICA, NORMANNICA, HIBERNICA, CAMBRICA, a veteribus scripta.

Asserus, de Ælfredi rebus gestis.

Anonymus, de vita Gulielmi Conquestoris.

Thomæ Walsingham, Historia brevis.

- - - - - Ypodigma Neustriæ.

Thomæ de la Moor, vita et mors Edwardi Secundi.

Wilhelmus Gemiticensis, de Ducum Normannorum gestis.

Giraldi Cambrensis, Topographia Hiberniæ.

Giraldi, *Expugnatio Hiberniæ, sive Historia Vaticinatis.*

- - - - *Itinerarium Cambriæ.*

The reputation of this work corresponds with the well-known talents of the editor; it was followed by a collection edited by Sir Roger Twysden, 1652, folio, with a preface by Selden :

HISTORIÆ ANGLICANÆ, scriptores X.

1. Simeon Monachus Dunelmensis, *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiæ.*

- - - - *de Archiepiscopis Eboraci.*

- - - - *de obsidione Dunelmi.*

- - - - *Historia de gestis regum Anglorum.*

2. Johannes Prior Hagustaldensis, *Historia, xxv Annorum.*

3. Ricardus Prior Hagustaldensis, *Tractatus de statu et Episcopis Hagustaldensis ecclesiæ.*

- - - - *de gestis Regis Stephani et de bello standardii.*

4. Ailredus, Abbas Rievallensis, *Descriptio belli standardii.*

- - - - *Genealogia Regum Anglorum.*

- - - - *Vita Edwardi Regis et Confessoris.*

- - - - *Historia de Sanctimoniali de Wattun.*

5. Radulphus de Diceto, *Abbreviationes Chronicorum.*

- - - - *Imagines Historiarum.*

- - - - *Series causæ inter Henricum Regem et Thomam Archiepiscopum.*

6. Johannes Brompton Jornallensis, *Chronicon ab anno Domini 588 ad 1198.*

7. Gervasius Monachus Dorobornensis, *Tractatus*

de combustione et reparatione, ecclesiæ
Dorobornensis.

Imaginationes de discordiis inter monachos
Cantuarienses et Archiepiscopum Baldwi-
num.

Chronica de tempore Regum Angliæ, Stephani.
Henrici II. et Richardi I.

Vitæ Dorobornensium, Archiepiscoporum.

8. Thomas Stubbs Dominicanus, Vitæ Eboracensium
Archiepiscoporum.

9. Gulielmus Thorn, Cantuariensis, Chronica de
rebus gestis Abbatum Sancti Augustini Can-
tuaræ.

10. Henricus Knyghton Leicestrensis, chronica de
eventibus Angliæ a tempore Regis Edgari
usque mortem Regis Ricardi secundi.

This edition has a high character for accuracy,
though the authors which it contains be of no great
value. In 1684, folio, was published, by W. Fulman,
as a continuation of the former work,

RERUM ANGLICARUM, Scriptorum Veterum.

TOMUS I.

Ingulfi Croylandensis Historia.

Petri Blesensis continuatio.

Chronica de Mailros, ab. A. D. 735 ad 1270.

Annales Burtonenses, ab. A. D. 1004 ad 1263.

Historiæ Croylandensis continuatio.

The skilful and modest editor dying soon after the
publication, Dr. Gale undertook a continuation of the
plan, though with somewhat a different title, in two
volumes, published at Oxford, 1687—1691, folio:

**HISTORIÆ BRITANNICÆ ET ANGLICANÆ,
Scriptores XX.**

TOMUS I.

Gildas, de excidio Britanniae liber querulus et epistola.

Eddius, Vita S. Wilfredi Episcopi Eboracensis.

Nennius, Eulogium Britanniae sive Historia Britonum.

Asserius, Annales seu Chronicon Fani Sancti Neoti.

Ranulphus Higden, Polychronicon, lib. vi.

Wilielmus Malmesburiensis de antiquitate Glastoniensis Ecclesia.

Anonymus Malmesburiensis, de pontificibus.

Anonymus Ramesiensis, liber de fundatione et benefactoribus Cœnobii Ramesiensis.

Anonymus Elyensis, Historia Ecclesia Elyensis, lib. i.

Thomas Elyensis, ex secundo libro, Historia Elyensis.

Johannes Wallingford, Chronica.

Radulphus de Diceto, Historia compendiosa de Regibus Britonum.

Anonymus, de partitione provinciae in schiras et Episcopatus, et Regna.

Johannes Fordun, Scoti Chronicon, sive Scotorum Historia.

Alcuinus Flaccus, de pontificibus et sanctis Ecclesiae Eboracensis, poema, A. D. 760.

TOMUS II.

Annales Marganenses, sive Chronica abbreviata a tempore Sancti Edwardi Regis ad 1232.

Thomas Wikes, Chronicon Salisburiensis Monasterii ab adventu Conquestoris ad annum 1304.

Annales Waverlienses ab A. D. 1066 ad 1291.

Galfridus Vinesalvus, Itinerarium Regis Anglorum Ricardi I. et aliorum in terram Hierosolymorum.

Walterus Hemingford, *Chronica de gestis Regum Angliæ ab an. 1066 ad. 1300.*

Though this work abounds in inaccuracies, yet the lovers of historical antiquities must be thankful for so copious a collection. The chronicle of Hemingford is merely a small portion; its more valuable part is supplied by Hearne. One of the least meritorious collections was edited by J. Sparke, London, 1724, folio:

HISTORIÆ ANGLICANÆ, Scriptores varii.

Chronicon Johannis Abbatis S. Petri de Burgo ab A.D. 654 ad. 1260.

Continuatio per Robertum de Boston ad 1368.

Historiæ Cœnobii Burgensis scriptores varii.

Vita S. Thomæ Cantuar, a W. Stephanide.

The smallest collection is a thin octavo, published at Copenhagen, 1757, edited by Car. Bertram: it is entitled

BRITANNICARUM GENTIUM, Historiæ Antiquæ scriptores tres.

Ricardus Corinensis, de situ Britanniae, libri II.

Nennii, Historia Britonum.

Gildæ, de excidio Britanniae.

The first of these works is a valuable piece of topography of the date of the fourteenth century; its author is better known by the name of the Monk of Cirencester, from the place of his birth.

F.—Baron Maseres published, in 1783 and 1807, a small collection, in quarto, of works relative to English

affairs near the time of the Conquest, with notes in English:

SELECTA MONUMENTA.

Encomium Emmæ, Incerto auctore sed coetaneo.

Gesta Gulielmi Ducis Normannorum, a Gulielmo Pictaviensi scripta.

Excerpta de Orderico Vitali, de Gulielmo I.

F.—But the history of the Normans is more amply illustrated by a collection of their early historians, published at Paris, in a folio volume, by M. Du Chesne, 1619:

HISTORIÆ NORMANNORUM, Scriptores Antiqui.

Gesta Normannorum, in Francia, ante Rollonem Ducem, ab ann. 837 ad. 896, auctore incerto.

Chronici Rhegionis, Abbatis Prumiensis, Excerptum ab. 812 ad. 892.

Annalium, in Fuldensi Monasterio, Scriptorum excerptum, ab. 808 ad. 891.

Alia Variorum Chronicorum, excerpta, ab 890 ad mortem Rollonis.

Abbonis, de obsessa a Normannis Lutetia Parisiorum, libri II.

Dudonis, Decani S. Quintini, de moribus et gestis primorum Normanniæ Ducum, ad ann. 1002, lib. III.

Emmæ Anglorum Regina Encomium, Incerto auctore sed coetaneo.

Gesta Guillelmi II. Ducis Normannorum a Guillelmo Pictavensi.

Willelmi Calculi, Gemmeticensis Monachi Historiæ Normannorum, lib. VII.

**Ordericus Vitalis, Anglicanæ Historiæ Ecclesiasticæ,
lib. XIII.**

**Gesta Stephanis Regis Anglorum, Incerto auctore
sed contemporaneo.**

**Chronica Normanniæ, ab ann. 1139 ad. 1259, auctore
anonymo.**

**Annalis, Historia brevis in Monasterio S. Stephani
Cadomensis conscripta ab. 1133 ad. 1293.**

Appendix, varia continens opuscula.

A.—We must not conclude our account of these fasciculi without mentioning the multifarious work of Henry Wharton, published in two volumes, folio, 1692:

ANGLIA SACRA, sive Collectio Historiarum partim antiquitatis, partim recenter, scriptorum de Archiepiscopis et Episcopis Angliæ.

I believe that I have not omitted any collection of English ancient historians which has hitherto been published: some of the more important authors have been edited separately, with notes, or in a better form. Editions of the works of the few writers not included in any of these collections I will now enumerate. In 1623, the learned Selden published, in one volume, small folio,

EADMERI, Monachi Cantuariensis Historiæ Novorum sive sui sæculi, libri VI. Res gestas sub Gulielmis I. et II. et Henrico I.

This is an esteemed work; but the most popular history is that of Matthew Paris, which has passed through five editions, the most common of which is

that of London, 1640, folio, edited by W. Watts; its title thus runs :

MATTHÆI PARIS, Historia Major cum Rogeri Wendoveri, Willielmi Rishangeri authorisque majori minorique Historiis Chronicisque MSS. huic primum editioni accesserunt duorum Offarum Merciorum Regum et viginti trium Abbatum S. Albani Vitæ.

So early as 1570 was printed, in London, the work of Matthew of Westminster, in folio :

FLORES HISTORIARUM, per Matthæum Westmonasteriensem, collecti, precipuæ de rebus Britannicis ab exordio mundi usque ad annum Domini 1307.

To a later edition, printed at Francfort, 1601, folio, is added a reprint of Florence of Worcester's.

CHRONICON EX CHRONICIS, ab initio mundi usque ad annum Domini 1118, deductum, auctore Florentii Wigornensis Monacho.

A separate edition of this work is found in 4to. 1592.

The Annales of Trivet, a writer of small importance, were edited and published by Anthony Hall, at Oxford, 1722:

NICOLAI TRIVETI, Dominicani, annales sex Regum Angliæ, Steph., Henr. II., Richard I., Johan., Hen. III., et Edv. I. 1387.

To this is adjoined,

**ANNALIUM, continuatio ut et Adami Murimuthensis,
Chronicon cum ejusdem continuatio ad 1380.**

The path thus pursued leads us to the historians published by that much derided person Thomas Hearne, who was in fact as great a curiosity himself as any which he gave to the public; but though his eagerness about matters inconceivably trifling, and his ridiculous conclusions, have often provoked either the wrath or laughter of his readers,* yet the diligence and accuracy with which he has given the text of several rare ancient writers, have procured for his memory a still increasing feeling of gratitude, if not of respect. The following is a list of all his historical works; they are in octavo, and were published at Oxford according to their respective dates; they bear an enormous price, and many of them are exceedingly scarce:

Spelman's Life of Ælfred the Great, with considerable additions. 1709.

The Itinerary of John Leland the antiquary, 9 vols. 1710.

Lelandi Antiquarii de rebus Britannicis Collectanea, 6 vols. 1715.

Johannis Rossii, Antiquarii Warwicensis, Historia Regum Angliæ. 1716.

Titii Livii, Foro Juliensis, Vita Henrici V. Regis Angliæ. 1716.

Aluredi Beverlacensis, Annales, sive Historia de gestis Regum Britanniae. 1716.

Roperi Guil. Vita D. Thomæ Mori, &c. 1716.

* Dibdin, Library Companica.

- Gulielmi Camdeni, *Annales Rerum Anglicarum et Hibernicarum*, regnante Elizabetha, 8 vols. 1717.
- Gulielmi Newbrigensis, *Historia sive Chronica Rerum Anglicarum*, 3 vols. 1719.
- Thomæ Sprotti, *Chronica*. 1719.
- Textus Roffensis. 1720.
- Roberti de Avesbury, *Historia de Mirabilibus gestis, Edwardi III.* 1720.
- Joannis de Fordun, *Scotichronicum*, 5 vols. 1722.
- History and Antiquities of Glastonbury*, by an anonymous author. 1722.
- Hemingi, *Chartularium Ecclesiæ Wigornensis*, 2 vols. 1723.
- Robert of Glocester's *Chronicle* (in verse, black letter), 2 vols. 1724.
- Peter Langtoft's *Chronicle* (in verse, black letter), 2 vols. 1725.
- Joannis Glastoniensis, *Chronica*, 2 vols. 1726.
- Adami Domerham, *Historia de rebus gestis Glastoniensibus*, 2 vols. 1727.
- Thomæ de Elmham, *Vita et gesta Henrici Quinti Anglorum Regis*. 1727.
- Liber Niger Scaccarii*, etiam *Wilhelmi Worcestrii, Annales Rerum Anglicarum*, 2 vols. 1728.
- Historia Vitæ et regni Richardi II. Angliæ Regis*, a Monacho quondam de Evesham. 1729.
- Johannis de Trokelowe, *Annales Edwardi II. et Henrici de Blaneford, Chronica et Edwardi II. Vita*. 1729.
- Thomæ Caii, *Vindiciæ, Antiquitatis Academiæ Oxoniensis, contra Johannem Caium Cantabrigiensem*, 2 vols. 1730.
- Walteri Hemingford, *Historia de rebus Edwardi I., Ed. II., et Ed. III.*, 2 vols.

Thomæ Otterbourne et Johannis Wethamstede, *Chronica ab origine Gentis Britannia, usque ad Edwardum IV.* 2 vols. 1732.

Chronicon, sive Annales Prioratus de Dunstaple, 2 vols. 1733.

Benedictus Abbas, Petroburgensis de vita et gestis Henrici II. et Ricardi I. 2 vols. 1735.

The text of these writers was published from MSS. reposing in various public and private libraries; and the copies by Thomas Hearne are most of them the sole editions extant.

F.—We had nearly forgotten that earliest record of English affairs, the *Saxon Chronicle*, which was first published by Bishop Gibson, at Oxford, 1692, in somewhat an imperfect state: a new and excellent edition, with a translation, by the Rev. J. Ingram, appeared in 1823, which leaves nothing to be desired on the subject.

A.—Thus the student, having a key to the works of all, or nearly all, the ancient English historians, an opportunity is given of ascertaining the accuracy of modern writers treading over the same ground; the value of whose testimony must alone be estimated from the conformity of their facts to these authorities. Such a "*Corpus Rerum Anglicarum*," continued through so many centuries of comparative darkness and ignorance, cannot but be considered as an historical treasure as extraordinary as inestimable.

F.—The attention of the historical student should also be directed to the publication of the various records now proceeding by the order of Government; and though perhaps these documents may fall more within the department of the lawyer or the professed antiquary than the historian, yet as they form a criterion by which

many of our ancient *domestica facta* may be verified, and as they are a counterpart to the intended magnificent edition of our historians, it would argue as deficient a sense of justice as of gratitude, did we pass them over unnoticed.

A.—Government had hitherto confined its attention to the publication of Domesday Book, the Rolls of Parliament and the Journals. Domesday Book was commenced in the year 1770, in consequence of an address from the House of Lords to the King, in 1767, and was completed in 1783, in two large folio volumes, but without either a title-page or any index: these deficiencies are now supplied. The Rolls of Parliament, “*Rotuli Parliamenti ut et Petitiones et Placita in Parlamento*,” were printed by an order of the House of Lords, March 9, 1767: they contain various parliamentary matters from 6th Edward I. to 19th Henry VII. The originals to 8th Edward IV. are preserved in the Tower, in six rolls, each consisting of several membranes tacked together. The Journals of the Lords were printed by an order of that house, 1767; they commence from the first year of Henry VIII., though some years of that reign are not preserved.

F.—In this good work the Lords were preceded by the Commons, who gave directions for their Journals to be published, 15th George II. 1742; they commence not quite so early as the Lords’ Journals, beginning with the first year of Edward VI.

A.—In consequence of a fire, which broke out in Dean’s Yard, Westminster, 31st October, 1731, and which destroyed several and damaged many of the MSS. of the Cotton Library, which had been removed thither, the House of Commons appointed a committee to enquire into the then state of the records: little how-

ever was done in consequence.* The library was deposited in a new building designed for the dormitory of Westminster School; and it remained there till it was finally removed to the British Museum in 1753. Nearly seventy years after the accident, on the 15th Feb. 1800, the House of Commons appointed a "Committee to enquire into the state of the public records of the kingdom." Towards the end of the session, this committee presented to the house the result of their proceedings, in the form of two connected reports, in which they submitted certain measures for the better preservation, arrangement, and more convenient use of the contents of the various public repositories; and they recommended a petition to the King to give directions for carrying the same into effect. In consequence his majesty George the Third appointed a commission, 19th July, 1800, and also another subsequently, 23d May, 1806, enabling certain commissioners to execute the measures recommended by the house; and the commissioners thus appointed, directed skilful persons to conduct the business. The detail of the whole proceedings appears in the publications entitled

Reports from the Select *Committee* appointed to enquire into the State of the Public Records of the Kingdom, ordered to be printed, 1801.

These reports are two in number, with voluminous appendices, forming one large folio volume, and are the basis of this great undertaking: they were followed by

Annual Reports of the Commissioners. 1806. Fur-

* Commissioners' First Report, page 69.

ther proceedings as relate to Scotland. 1808, 1809.

Reports from the Commissioners in Ireland. 1811—1820.

But a more valuable document appears in the

Reports from the *Commissioners* appointed by his Majesty to execute the Measures recommended by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, respecting the Public Records of the Kingdom, ordered to be printed, 1812; and again, 1819.

These reports, like those of the Committee, are also two in number, with voluminous and valuable appendices: in them the commissioners give an account of the progress of their labours. The measures which regard England are distributed under five heads: 1. Buildings. 2. Calendars and indexes. 3. Transfers. 4. Establishments of office. 5. The selection of such original records and documents as it may be expedient to print under the authority of parliament. It is only to the second and fifth of these heads that our present enquiries lead us. The first record published under the commission is

Taxatio Ecclesiastica, Angliæ et Walliæ, Auctoritate P. Nicholai IV. circa A. D. 1291. Printed 1802.

Pope Innocent XXII., to whose predecessors the first-fruits and tenths of all ecclesiastical benefices had for a long time been paid, gave the same, A. D. 1253, to Henry III. for three years. In the year 1268, Pope Nicholas IV. granted the tenths to Edward I. for six

years, towards defraying the expense of an expedition to the Holy Land, of which grant this document is the record of the proceeds.

Calendarium Rotulorum Patentium, in Turri Londinensi. 1802.

The Patent Rolls in the Tower of London commence in the third year of King John, and end in the twenty-third year of Edward IV.: they contain grants of offices and lands; restitutions of temporalities to bishops, &c.; confirmations of grants made to bodies corporate; grants in fee-farm; special liveries; grants of offices, special and general; patents of creations of peers, and licenses of all kinds which pass the great seal. The present publication is a calendar or index to these documents.

A Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library, deposited in the British Museum. 1802.

Calendarium Rotulorum Chartarum; et Inquisitionum ad quod damnum. 1803.

The Charter Rolls in the Tower of London begin in the first year of King John, 1199, and end with the reign of Edward IV. 1483: they contain royal grants of privileges to cities, towns, bodies corporate, and private trading companies; grants of markets, fairs, and free warrens; grants of creation of nobility, privileges to religious houses, &c.

The Inquisitions, ad quod damnum, also in the Tower, commence with the first year of Edward II. and end with the thirty-eighth year of Henry VI. These

records were taken in virtue of writs directed to the escheator of each county, when any grant was solicited, to enquire by a jury whether it might prove prejudicial to the king or to others. This volume contains a copious index both to the Rolls and to the Inquisitions.

Rotulorum Originalium in Curia Scaccarii abbreviatio, temporibus Regum Hen. III., Ed. I., Ed. II., et Ed. III., 2 vols. 1805—1810.

The Originalia are records of the Court of Exchequer; being estreats transmitted from the Court of Chancery into the Lord Treasurer's remembrancer's office, of all grants of the crown inrolled on the patent and other rolls, whereon any rent is reserved, any salary payable, or any service to be performed; which estreats commence about the beginning of the reign of Henry III., and are continued to a late period.

Calendarium Inquisitionum Post Mortem sive Escætarum, 4 vols. 1806—1819.

These Inquisitions, preserved in the Tower of London, sometimes called Escheats, commence with the early part of the reign of Henry III. and end with the last year of Richard III. These records were taken by virtue of writs directed to the escheators of each county or district, to summon a jury, who were to enquire what lands any person died seized of, and by what rents or services the same were held, and who was the next heir, that the king might be informed of his right of escheat or wardship. These volumes contain a copious index of such documents.

**Nonarum Inquisitiones in Curia Scaccarii Temp.
Regis Edw. III. 1807.**

These records are in the king's remembrancer's office in the Exchequer; they originated from a grant made to Edward III. by parliament, in the fourteenth year of his reign, after his vain assumption of the title of King of France, of the ninth lamb, the ninth fleece, and the ninth sheaf, and in cities and boroughs, the ninth part of goods and moveables. Commissioners were appointed to levy the tax according to the rate in which churches were valued in the record of Pope Nicholas IV. To gain a correct estimate whether the ninth was more or less than the ecclesiastical valuation, the commissioners were directed to take inquisitions (the records now published), upon the oath of the parishioners.

**Testa de Nevill, sive Liber Feodorum in Curia
Scaccarii, Temp. Hen. III. et Ed. I. 1807.**

This document, so named either from Ralph de Nevill, an accountant in the Exchequer, or of Jollan de Nevill, an itinerant justice, both of the reign of Henry III., is a list—1. Of fees holden immediately of the king, or of others who hold of the king in capite; as also of fees held in frank-almoigne, with their respective values. 2. Of serjeanties holden of the king, with their value. 3. Of widows and heiresses of tenants in capite, whose marriages were in the gift of the king, with the value of their lands. 4. Of churches in the gift of the king. 5. Of escheats, as well of the lands of Normans as others. 6. Of the amount of the sums paid for scutage and aid, &c., by each tenant.

A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum, with indexes of persons, places, and matters, 4 vols. 1808—1812.

Placitorum in Domo Capitulari Westmonasterii, asservatorum abbreviatio, temporibus Regum Ric. I., Johann., Henr. III., Edw. I., Edw. II. 1811.

This volume is in the nature of a calendar or index to the most ancient records in the king's superior courts: it is compiled from several volumes of abstracts of pleadings preserved in the Chapter House of Westminster.

Libri Censualis, vocati Domesday Book Indices. 1816.

This volume contains a copious and valuable introduction to Domesday Book; with indexes: 1. Of the names of places according to the order of the counties. 2. A general index of places and possessions. 3. Of the names of the tenants in chief. 4. Of the chief affairs in the record.

Libri Censualis vocati Domesday Book additamenta ex codic. antiquiss. 1816.

This volume contains four returns of a similar nature with Domesday Book: 1. Exon Domesday, the originals of which are preserved in Exeter cathedral, is an exact transcription of the returns made by the Conqueror's commissioners in the western part of the kingdom, for his great work. 2. Inquisitio Eliensis, from a register of the monastery in the Cotton MSS., British Museum: this is a document of the same kind

as the Exon Domesday, and relates to the property of the monastery of Ely. 3. The Winton Domesday, from the archives of the Society of Antiquaries. King Henry I., desirous of ascertaining what lands Edward the Confessor held in Winchester, as of his own demesne, ordered this survey between the years 1107 and 1128. 4. The Boldon Book, so called from a village of that name near Sunderland, is a survey of the county of Durham, by Hugh de Pudsey, the bishop, 1183. No original record exists, and the work is transcribed from an ancient copy amongst the Laud MSS. at Oxford.

The Statutes of the Realm, from original records and authentic manuscripts, 9 vols. 1810—1822.

The portion of the statutes published by the commissioners commences with the statute of Merton, 20th Henry III. 1236; and ends with the last year of Queen Anne. In the introduction an historical account is given of all former printed collections, translations, and abridgments of the statutes, with various other useful information. To the first volume is prefixed a series of the charters of the liberties of England, from 1st Henry I. A. D. 1101, to the 29th Edward I. A. D. 1301; and engraved fac-similes of several, amongst which are, the Charter of Liberties, granted by King Stephen, in Exeter cathedral; the Articuli Magne Carte of King John, in the British Museum; the Magna Carta of John, in Lincoln cathedral; the Carta de Foresta of Henry III., and the Magna Carta of Henry III., in Durham cathedral; the Entry of the Charter of Confirmation, 21st Henry III. in the Charter Roll of that year, in the Tower of London; and the Charter of Inspeximus, 25th Edward I., in the town clerk's office.

London. In the subsequent volumes also are several fac-similes of interesting and important documents.

Valor Ecclesiasticus, temp. Hen. VIII., 1535, auctoritate Regia, Institutus, 5 vols. 1810—1825.
(Not yet completed.)

These documents are compiled from various books and rolls in the First Fruits Office. In the twenty-sixth year of Henry VIII., 1534, an act passed, granting to the king the first fruits and tenths of the revenues of the clergy, which had heretofore found their way to the court of Rome. An enquiry was in consequence set on foot to ascertain the value of all ecclesiastical benefices whatever throughout the kingdom, of which the volumes before us are the result.

Rotuli Hundredorum, temp. Hen. III. et Edw. I., in Turr. Lond. et in curia receptæ Scaccarii, Westm. asservati, 2 vols. 1812—1818.

The rolls officially denominated the Hundred Rolls, contain inquisitions taken in pursuance of a special commission issued under the great seal, dated in the second year of Edward I.: they are the records of inquisitions made by juries summoned in the several counties of England. The original returns of some of the counties appear to be lost, but they are supplied in this work from a contemporaneous document, and the whole relates to enquiries made concerning knights' fees, escheats, wardships, alienations, &c. that the king might not be deprived of his rights. There are also some other Hundred Rolls preserved in the Tower, forming part of a general survey of the kingdom, 7th

Edward I. for the same purpose: the returns for five counties only are extant, and these are printed at the end of the former inquisitions.

Placita de quo warranto, temporibus Edward I., II., et III., in curia receptæ Scaccarii Westm. asservata. 1818.

In consequence of the abuses discovered by the inquisitions detailed in the Hundred Rolls, an act, called the Statute of Gloucester, was made in the sixth year of Edward I., relating to liberties, franchises, &c.; and when the judges went their circuit, they issued writs of right and quo warranto against such persons who claimed certain manors, liberties, &c., where the jury had determined *nesciunt quo warranto*, that they knew not by what warrant such manors were continued to be held. This volume contains the pleas held upon these claims: the originals are repositied in the Court of the Receipt of the Exchequer, at the Chapter House in Westminster.

Rymeri Fœdera, Conventiones, Litteræ et cujuscunque generis, acta publica, inter Reges Angliæ et alios quosvis Imperatores, Reges, Pontifices, Principes vel communitates, ab ingressu Gulielmi I., in Angliam, A.D. 1066, ad nostra usque Tempora habita aut tractata, vol. 1. 1816. The work still proceeding, in not less than twenty volumes.

In the new edition of this very valuable collection, are proposed, 1. An extension of the limits of the Fœdera, as published by Mr. Rymer in the reign of Queen Anne, to an earlier and later period of time.

2. The vérification of the old materials, and the addition of others within the same reigns. 3. A chronological arrangement, with a reference to the repository in which each article is to be found. 4. Typographical improvements in the execution of the whole. The work is ornamented with fac-simile specimens of various documents, and of the seals of the kings of England, from the Conqueror to Edward II. inclusive.

A Catalogue of the Lansdown Manuscripts in the British Museum. 1819.

Rotuli Scotiæ in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi, asservati, 2 vols. 1814—1819.

These rolls are an important collection of records, illustrative of the political transactions between England and Scotland; they commence with the nineteenth year of Edward I., and terminate with the eighth of Henry VIII.

Inquisitionum ad Capellam Domini Regis Retornatarum quæ in publicis archivis Scotiæ adhuc servantur, abbreviatio, 3 vols. 1811—1816.

The record, of which an abridgment is here given, comprehends all those proceedings by inquest or the verdict of an assize, which originate in certain writs issuing from Chancery in Scotland, and which are ultimately transmitted or “retoured” to that office. From the supposed destruction of the records of Chancery in Scotland in the minority of Queen Mary, the present series begins no earlier than the year 1547, and terminates with the end of the seventeenth century.

Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum, in Archivis Publicis Asservatum. 1814.

This volume contains a select collection of all the ancient royal charters of Scotland, from 1306 to 1424, drawn not only from the existing registers of the great seal, but from original charters in the possession of individuals and public bodies.

The Acts of Parliaments in Scotland, 1st vol. not yet published, 2d vol. 1815. The work still proceeding.

The Statutes and Ordinances of Ireland. Publishing in Dublin.

The works thus enumerated are all which the commissioners intend publishing,* at least in England: they will amount in number, when complete, to little less than a hundred folios: each work is illustrated with a fac-simile engraving of a portion of the record. Government has liberally distributed copies gratuitously to upwards of one hundred and twenty public and collegiate libraries in the kingdom.

F.—Whether the commissioners, like other benefactors to their species, will

Close their long labours with a sigh, to find
The unwilling gratitude of base mankind,

I cannot tell; for though the Statutes, the *Fœdera*, and the Catalogues will be a lasting monument of national utility, yet ugly doubts have been started whether burning rather than printing would not have been the

* Commissioners' Report, p. 7.

more eligible process for most part of the remainder. This plan was indeed once proposed by the irreverent levellers in the days of the Commonwealth. Mr. Rose, in his return,* admits that "our constitution is too well settled now, to render any investigation of any of the earliest records of real importance with regard to its limits or its form;" and however valuable the original documents may be considered by the antiquary, to clear up certain occasional, but frequently insignificant, points, the common herd, I am afraid, will look with wonder and amazement at printed volumes containing such vast accumulations of incredible dulness and apparent inutility.

P.—In dilating upon the copious theme of printed illustrations of the ancient English history, we have strangely wandered from the consideration of the events of the fifteenth century.

F.—Before finally taking leave, we must acknowledge our obligations to two foreign historians of great celebrity, Monstrelet and Comines, who have elucidated that era. The "Chroniques" of the first writer take up the story where it was left by Froissart in 1401, and he continues it to 1467. This author, an officer in the service of the Duke of Burgundy, though somewhat languid and diffuse, is simple, clear, and highly trustworthy: he incorporated with the general history of France many particulars of the surrounding nations, and England amongst the number. The "Memoires" of Comines, on a nearly similar plan, extend from 1464 to 1498. This author was a native of Flanders, and held an eminent station in the court of Louis the Eleventh, with whom he was on terms of familiar intimacy. Possessing great penetration and knowledge

* Committee's Report, p. 47.

of mankind, he traces circumstances to their origin, and is prodigal of excellent remarks; thus uniting the opportunity of observing with the talent of describing, his history is exceeded in value by few of any age or country, and is still read with interest: his authentic portrait of a cruel and jealous tyrant in the person of Louis the Eleventh, at once suffering and inflicting equal misery, has never been surpassed.

P.—However superior then the early annalists of England may have been, we have nothing to compete during the latter half of the fourteenth and the whole of the fifteenth century, with the great French historical triumvirate, Froissart, Monstrelet, and Comines.

F.—Fortunately too for their continued popularity, they wrote in the vernacular dialect of their country; whereas in England the fashion of using the English tongue in similar efforts did not commence till after the introduction of the art of printing.

A.—One of the earliest examples of an English composition of this nature is "The Concordance of Stories," by Robert Fabian: it begins with the arrival of Brutus, and ends at the twentieth year of Henry the Seventh. The language of this writer is very intelligible, and the book is valuable for the plainness and sincerity with which it is written: its information on contemporary subjects has always been deemed authentic; and it contains many curious particulars relative to the affairs of the city of London not elsewhere to be met with. Fabian died either in 1511 or 1512: his example encouraged a crowd of historical writers, such as Sir Thomas More, Hall, Grafton, Holinshed, Fox, and Stow, to follow his footsteps; from whose pages indeed by far the larger portion of the historical information of the fifteenth century is derived.

F.—But as these worthies belong to the age of the Tudors, this is not the place to particularize their merits or defects.

A.—The excellent person, William Caxton, who, by introducing the art of printing, was the chief cause of the English tongue becoming the vehicle of history, must not be so slightly passed over. This worthy citizen was born in the Weald of Kent, 1412, and apprenticed to a merchant in London;^a he afterwards resided for thirty years in the Low Countries, probably as agent for the Mercers' Company; but in the latter part of the period, he filled some office in the household of Margaret of York, duchess of Burgundy. That he was held in high esteem, is evident from his having been previously entrusted by Edward the Fourth to assist in carrying on a treaty with the duke.^b Not being much occupied, Caxton relates that he had translated into English, from the French of the *Sieur Raoul le Fevre*, some books of "*The Recuyel of the Historys of Troye*," which circumstance reaching the ears of his patroness the duchess, she desired to see them; when having found fault with his English, she ordered him to correct it and finish the work.^c Caxton having become acquainted with the newly discovered art of printing, ventured to put the book to the press at Cologne in 1471. A copy of "*The Recuyel of the Historys of Troye*" is in the King's Library, and another, at the sale of the Roxburghe collection, fetched the enormous price of £1060 18s., which once belonged to Queen Elizabeth Grey, and was probably the presentation copy of the printer.^d Caxton, after disposing of as many copies on the continent as he was able, came over to England

^a Ames, Dibdin.

^c Proem to the *Recuyel*.

^b Rymer, vol. 11.

^d Ames, Dibdin.

in 1472 with the remainder, as specimens of his skill. Encouraged by the Abbot of Westminster, Thomas Milling, he soon after set up a printing-press in the Almonry at that city, situated near the abbey; and there he produced, in 1474, "The Game of Chesse," the first book that is known with certainty to have been printed in England: a copy of this work is also in the Royal Library, and another copy in the possession of the Duke of Marlborough.^a

F.—Attempts have been made to deprive Caxton of the honour of introducing the art of printing into England, in favour of one Frederick Corsellis, a Dutchman, who it is pretended printed at Oxford six years earlier; but the story is improbable, and no specimen of his labour has been produced.^b

A.—It is granted that before the death of Caxton, other printers, encouraged by his example and success, exercised their art, of whom were Rood, Lettou, Machlinia, and Wynkyn de Worde, foreigners; and Thomas Hunt, an Englishman, in London; there was also a press at St. Albans, worked by a schoolmaster, in a chapel, within the limits of the monastery, 1480.^c

F.—It is to the credit of the English ecclesiastics, that they seem to have been the chief promoters of the introduction of this new and important discovery into England; whereas on the continent the monks,^d when printing was first practised, asserted that there was a new language discovered called Greek, of which people should beware, since it was that which produced all the heresies; and that there was another new language which was called Hebrew, and they who learned it were turned Jews.

^a Ames, Dibdin.

^b Biog. Brit.

^c Ames, Dibdin.

^d Hody de Texti Biblio, p. 465.

A.—Caxton was at the age of fifty-six when he returned to England; and though so great was his industry that he published fifty volumes, some of them of large size, and many of which were translated by himself, yet it must be admitted that he did not excel in the choice of his subjects, which though sufficiently various, were frequently trifling, and would be tedious to enumerate.

F.—Having been bred to business, we may suppose that he accommodated his productions to the taste of the times, probably imagining that lighter subjects would meet with a more rapid sale than original classics, or works in the abstruser sciences.

A.—Another cause might exist in Caxton's acknowledged ignorance of Latin, and consequently his incompetence to superintend the publication of any work in that language. He published a wretched translation of part of the *Æneid*, from the French, for which he was sharply, and not unjustly, rebuked by the Scottish poet Gavin Douglas;^a but that he was able to discriminate works of merit, may be implied from his edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, and some other of Chaucer's pieces, whose excellence he perfectly understood, as he has ably characterized the genius of that great poet. Caxton also attempted to versify himself, but miserable was the attempt; nor were his efforts as an historian, in his additional book to Higden's *Polychronicon*, of much greater value; yet in his various proems or prefaces there are many curious particulars relative to the manners and customs of his age. So industrious was his nature, that his labours were interrupted only by his death, a translation from the French, of the *Lives of the Fathers* being completed on the last day of his life, 1491.^b On looking

^a Ames, Dibdin.

^b Biograph. Brit.

back on the page of English history, we shall find no greater benefactor to his country; and though no monument of brass or marble records his merits or his name, he has left a memorial which bids defiance to decay. If our great architect chose as an appropriate motto for his sepulchre, in St. Paul's cathedral, *Si monumentum quæris circumspice*, with equal truth may it be applied to William Caxton; as wherever we turn our eyes we behold the stupendous effect of his example, in the unbounded influence of the press, ameliorating all classes and conditions of society, and pervading, like one of the common elements of nature, every dwelling in the kingdom, from the straw-thatched cottage to the imperial palace.

FINIS.

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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

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